

## Results of King's medical tests 'excellent'

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, was reassured, during a phonecall from Mayo Clinic in the United States on Saturday, that His Majesty King Hussein enjoys good health and that the results of the medical tests he underwent were excellent. King Hussein left for the U.S. on Thursday for medical checkups and for talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton and senior U.S. officials.

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## 16 Palestinians injured

# Arafat attacks Israel for 'aggression' amid continued unrest in West Bank

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat accused Israel on Saturday of escalating "aggression" against Palestinians and called for international protection for his people as the West Bank seethed with fresh unrest.

Scores of Palestinians have been wounded in four days of violent confrontations between Palestinian stone-throwers and Israeli troops, sparked by Tuesday's killing of three Palestinian labourers at an Israeli checkpoint west of Hebron. "I am sorry to say they're escalating their aggression against our people and we are asking for international protection very soon," Mr. Arafat told reporters in Gaza.

Palestinian youths and Israeli troops clashed in the West Bank on Saturday, leaving 16 Palestinians injured, in the fifth day of riots sparked by the killing of three Arab workers.

Over 200 youths pelted Israeli soldiers with stones in the West Bank town of Hebron, bringing heavy volleys of tear gas and rubber-coated bullets which lightly injured three protesters and a Palestinian policeman, witnesses said.

Palestinian security reinforcements linked arms in a line across the street and pushed back the youths in an attempt to prevent them from throwing stones at the soldiers, witnesses said.

Similar clashes broke out in the morning in the nearby town of Dura, where seven protesters were injured.

In clashes in Bethlehem, a Palestinian security officer was shot in the stomach by Israeli soldiers who were firing on a mob of around 100 protesters who were pelting them with stones and iron bars, witnesses said.

As the officer was bundled into an ambulance, another Palestinian officer fired in the air with his Kalashnikov automatic rifle to warn back the Israelis, witnesses said.

Palestinian security forces then pushed back the protesters to put an end to clashes, which also left four protesters lightly injured by rubber-coated bullets.



A Palestinian youth screams at Israeli soldiers to stop shooting as three of his friends lie on the ground after being shot by Israeli fire, when hundreds of Palestinians clashed with Israeli soldiers in the West Bank village of Dura on Saturday (Reuters photo)

The injured officer, Major Badie Al Atti of the National Security Forces, underwent an operation in a Bethlehem hospital, and was in moderate condition, hospital officials said.

The Israeli army said two officers were lightly wounded after being pelted with stones near Dura.

The U.S. State Department said on Friday that Washington was "extremely concerned" about the upsurge of violence and was searching for ways to revive deadlocked Middle East peace moves.

"We are extremely concerned about the situation in the Middle East right now," State Department spokesman James Rubin told a regular briefing.

"The reaction on the ground to the use of lethal force which resulted in the deaths of three Palestinians is a strong indicator of the underlying resentment that exists there that is a function of the crisis of confidence that has evolved so tragically in the Middle East peace process," Mr. Rubin said.

He reiterated the U.S. stand that, although U.S. President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright have

worked hard to mediate, it is up to the regional leaders to make the decisions that will lead to peace.

"We are actively talking amongst ourselves about what the best way is to revitalise the Middle East peace process. Clearly, it's not making any progress right now," he said.

"What we're doing, therefore, is looking at our options and analysing the situation and when we have some new proposal or new ideas, as opposed to an American plan, we will share those with you," Mr. Rubin said.

In Hebron, Palestinian journalists staged a protest after Israeli troops on Friday wounded nine reporters covering clashes there, including two working for Reuters.

"We Palestinian journalists view with grave concern the recurrent and deliberate shooting of Palestinian and cameramen by Israeli army soldiers and Jewish settlers," the Hebron journalists said in a statement.

At least two other Palestinians were wounded in the violence, which erupted on Friday night after dozens of radical Jewish settlers

entered the Palestinian-led side of divided Hebron for a protest march, ignoring army orders to turn back.

The army said its forces did not notice the journalists during the clashes, but reporters said they had shouted to troops that they were members of the press.

The army said that soldiers had been re-briefed on riot control procedures "in order to ensure that innocent people won't be hurt."

Israeli police said a number of known settlers would be summoned for questioning on a number of charges.

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## Bomb injures one in Israeli bus station

AFULA (AFP) — A bomb exploded in the central bus station of the northern Israeli town of Afula on Saturday, seriously injuring the Jewish man who discovered it, Israeli police said.

The explosive device was hidden under a box in the station in Afula, a town 70 kilometres north of Tel Aviv, and apparently went off when a man lifted the box to see what it was, police spokeswoman Linda Menuchin told AFP.

Israel's police commander in the north, Eli Kron, said the bombing may have been a politically-motivated attack but he could not yet say for sure. Israel Radio reported.

Police said they had detained a few Arabs in the area for questioning, the radio reported.

Police sources told the radio the attackers may have been from the West Bank city of Jenin located some 10 kilometres away and intended only to show their ability to operate in Israeli territory, but not to actually harm anyone.

The unidentified man in his 30s was taken to hospital in serious condition with wounds to his face and arms but doctors said his life was not in danger.

No other injuries occurred since the bus station was closed and largely empty because of the Jewish Sabbath weekend.

No group claimed responsibility for planting the bomb.

## Sharon spells out Lebanon pullout plan

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAELI CABINET Minister Ariel Sharon spelled out on Friday a plan for a staged withdrawal of Israeli troops from south Lebanon.

It was the first time that the hasty ex-general who orchestrated Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon had given public support for a withdrawal.

If no agreement could be reached with Beirut, he said, Israel should pull troops out of its south Lebanon occupation zone in stages while warning the Lebanese government of reprisals if Islamist guerrillas staged cross-border attacks.

"We will be ready in stages, with supervision of the results, to carry out an evacuation in Lebanon," Mr. Sharon told Channel Two television.

"We say in advance (to

the Lebanese): 'we see you as responsible.' This has to be done in stages. We'll establish new rules in which the Israeli army will be able to provide the responses for the security of the northern area."

In a separate interview with Israel Television, Mr. Sharon said he would raise his proposals at this week's meeting of the Israeli government's inner security cabinet.

"I propose a redeployment after a warning — setting very clear rules, withdrawing from a portion of the area, allowing the Lebanese to enter, announcing in advance what we're about to do, warning them in advance what we will do if it doesn't happen," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he is prepared to

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## Sharon vows Misha'al will be killed

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon said Saturday that Israel would assassinate a leader of Hamas in Jordan despite a failed attempt on his life last year. "We will assassinate [Khaled] Misha'al," the hardline Sharon told Israel television Channel Two. Israeli agents bungled an attempt last year to kill Mr. Misha'al in Amman, severely damaging relations between Israel and Jordan. In response to his remarks, the Islamic Hamas warned of severe consequences to Israel if it harmed Mr. Misha'al. "This demonstrates the terrorist mind of the Zionists," Hamas spokesman in Gaza, Abdul Aziz Al Randissi, told AFP. "We say to Sharon and the government... if they kill Khaled Misha'al, they will pay a very high price."

## Regent orders release of more Ma'an detainees

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Saturday ordered the release of more of those arrested in connection with the riots in the southern town of Ma'an last month.

Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that the order is in implementation of the "wish of His Majesty King Hussein to speed up investigations and other related legal procedures."

The agency added that only seven detainees were still being held by the security authorities.

In a similar step last week 29 detainees were released.

Ma'an Lower House Deputy Waleed Awajan told the Jordan Times that he and other deputies from Ma'an asked Prince Hassan for help in releasing the detainees.

Mr. Awajan said he made the call to the Regent during a meeting with the Crown Prince at the Royal Scientific Society (RSS).

"We asked His Highness to put an end to the hardships of the detainees and he said that everything will end well," Mr. Awajan said.

"We want an end to the crisis and we want to find out the reasons behind riots and why they happened," the deputy said.

Last month one person was killed and more than 23 people injured following two days of riots in Ma'an, a home for more than 30,000 inhabitants.

Police and civilians opened fire at each other during the two-day unrest, which led to the army deployment in the city and a six-day curfew.

More than 20 people were arrested, the majority of them were released later on (see story on page 3).

## Crown Prince, Abbas discuss escalation of crisis in W. Bank

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Saturday met with senior Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas who delivered a message from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Palestinian Ambassador to Amman Omar Khatib said the meeting focused on the escalation of tensions in the self-rule areas following the killing of three Palestinian workers near an Israeli army checkpoint on Tuesday.

The incident led angry demonstrators to confront Israeli army in several Palestinian cities. Tens of young Palestinians were injured by Israeli army bullets (see separate story).

A 12-year-old boy was declared brain dead after being struck by a bullet in the head

on Friday. "Mr. Abbas has briefed His Royal Highness about the recent developments and the escalation in tension following the mass killing of the Palestinians and the injured who fall every day because of Israeli army bullets," Mr. Khatib told the Jordan Times.

"The situation remains under [Palestinian] control but nobody could predict what is going to happen if tension escalates in the Palestinian areas," Mr. Khatib said.

He said that the Palestinian side called for an international committee to investigate the "mass killing and crimes against the Palestinians which are occurring everyday."

Last week, Prince Hassan visited the West Bank town of Ramallah and held talks with President Arafat over ways to resume the stalled peace process between the Palesti-

ans and Israelis.

A day later, the Crown Prince also met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a bid to narrow the gap between the two sides.

"The meeting was also a follow-up for the Ramallah meeting between President Arafat and Prince Hassan to continue their coordination over peace making with Israel," Mr. Khatib said.

During Saturday's meeting "there was exchange of letters between President Arafat and Prince Hassan over the continuation of coordination between the two sides," Mr. Khatib added.

The ambassador said that Mr. Abbas informed Prince Hassan that no progress was achieved between the Palestinian National Authorities (PNA) and Israel.

## King, Clinton meet on Thursday

WASHINGTON (R) — The White House has said that U.S. President Bill Clinton would meet next week with King Hussein, who has urged a direct dialogue between the United States and Iraq to resolve their differences.

"The president is looking forward to greeting King Hussein of Jordan here," White House spokesman Barry Toiv told reporters Friday. "They'll be meeting here to discuss Iraq and the Middle East peace process."

Mr. Toiv said the King would meet Mr. Clinton on Thursday. The King will also meet Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Defence Secretary William Cohen and members of Congress, although the schedule for those meetings is not known, he said.

The King is in the United States on a private trip. White House press secretary, Mike

McCurry, said. "But as he often does when he is here and if he has occasion to be in Washington, the president likes to spend time with him [King Hussein]," he said.

King Hussein last week said a dialogue was the best means to prevent the crisis that brought the United States to the verge of attacking Iraq last month over U.N. weapons inspectors, and Baghdad responded that it agreed with the idea. However, the U.S. has taken a dim view of the idea, saying Iraq's obligations to comply with U.N. resolutions were clear, and a dialogue would only be necessary if there were issues that still needed clarification.

"We don't really see any value in direct dialogue at this point," said a U.S. official.

Also on Friday, the U.S. Senate approved a non-binding resolution branding Iraqi President Saddam Hussein a

war criminal and calling for his indictment by an international tribunal to be set up under United Nations authority.

Mr. McCurry said the administration had not formally joined in charges against President Saddam.

"You certainly could make a good argument that he deserves that designation and we are going to study the resolution passed by the Senate carefully," he said.

At the U.S. State Department, the chances of U.N. Security Council approval of such a war crimes tribunal were seen as slim by spokesman James Rubin. But he said it was possible if the crimes were documented that support for indictment would grow.

"We do support an effort to document Iraqi war crimes, including those of Saddam Hussein," Mr. Rubin said.

## Security Council approves pilgrimage plan for Iraqis

Combined agency dispatches

BRITAIN SAID on Saturday it was giving \$11.7 million worth of humanitarian aid to help relieve the suffering of Iraqis, particularly children.

"The people of Iraq have suffered too much," International Development Minister Clare Short said in a statement.

"[Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein manipulates the suffering of his people and uses it for propaganda. But we must do all we can to relieve their suffering," she added.

She said Britain would be channelling its new aid in food and medicine.

Ms. Short and British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook will be co-hosting a meeting to discuss how the European Union (EU) and others can help the United Nations to

implement effectively an expanded oil-for-food programme. No date was given for the meeting.

The U.N. Security Council's Iraqi Sanctions Committee approved a plan on Friday to enable up to 22,000 Iraqis to make the pilgrimage to Mecca early next month, though it appeared uncertain whether Baghdad would accept it.

The committee is to meet again Monday, when an answer is expected from Baghdad.

There is general agreement that, as an exception to sanctions in force since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, each Iraqi pilgrim should be allocated up to \$2,000 from the U.N. "oil-for-food" programme, under which Baghdad is allowed to sell limited amounts of oil to pay for humanitarian necessities.

This would make a total of

up to \$44 million, if the quota set by Saudi Arabia of 22,000 pilgrims from Iraq is filled.

But Baghdad insists the money should be funnelled through the Iraqi central bank, which would disburse it among the pilgrims, many of whom would fly to Saudi Arabia aboard Royal Jordanian Airline flights. This would be another exception to sanctions, which normally bar flights to and from Iraq.

The Sanctions Committee, chaired by Ambassador Antonio Monteiro of Portugal, says U.N. legal counsel Hans Corell has ruled that sanctions resolutions bar any of the money from passing through the Iraqi central bank or any other Iraqi entity.

After extensive consultations, Mr. Monteiro won

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## Regent calls for bridging gap between scientific community, rest of public

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Saturday underlined the importance of the scientific dimension in the present age for the benefit of national interests, stressing the need for bridging the gap between the scientific community and the rest of the Jordanian public.

He underscored the role of science and knowledge, saying that the productive citizen is considered the most precious asset in the country.

The Regent was address-

ing the speaker and members of the Lower House of Parliament during their visit to the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) where they inspected its various sections and research units.

The Regent underlined the importance for the representatives of the Jordanian people to acquaint themselves with scientific achievements in Jordan. He said such achievements require all out efforts in order to utilise science for the benefit of the country and to reaffirm commitment to scientific method-

ology.

"We ought to be constantly ready to renew these concepts within the context of development work in all parts of the Kingdom and in all provinces and constituencies," said the Regent.

"We seek the best ways for developing our human resources in this country," the Crown Prince added.

Prince Hassan urged the Lower House members to integrate the objective legislation and consistent

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## Draft elections law excludes proposed women's parliamentary quota — Rashid

By Francesca Ciriaci  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The draft elections law, to be submitted to Parliament later this month, maintains the current ethnic and religious quotas but it does not give in to activists' demands for a women's quota. Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid said Saturday.

"There will be no changes in the current quota system," Mr. Rashid told the Jordan Times, referring to the 12 minority seats in the 80-member Lower House.

The current elections law allocates nine seats to Christians — officially estimated at six per cent of the 4.3 million population, but unofficially put at around three per cent — and three seats to Chechens and Circassians.

Women's groups united in favour of a temporary quota after none of the 17 women

candidates in the last November's elections — including Toujan Faisal, the only female deputy in Jordan's history — won a seat.

Activists have been pressing the government to earmark 20 per cent of seats in Parliament for women, an idea rejected outright by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali.

Mr. Rashid added that the voting age will be lowered from 19 to 18.

The government is expected to submit the draft law to regulate the 2001 elections to the Lower House on Sunday.

The opposition, out of Parliament following its boycott of the last elections, protested that it should have been consulted on such a key piece of legislation.

Twelve opposition parties, grouping Islamists, leftists, pan-Arabists and Ba'athists, decided not to take part in

the last elections in protest against the 1994 peace treaty with Israel and what they termed as "a steady erosion of parliamentary authority."

They also cited the one-person, one-vote system, introduced as a temporary law in 1993 and endorsed by Parliament in early 1997, as one of the reasons behind their boycott.

The mainly Islamist opposition has long criticised the electoral formula as an attempt to reduce their parliamentary representation.

They argue that in a tribal society such as Jordan, voters would cast their one ballot according to family considerations, rather than political affiliation.

However, Mr. Rashid said the one-person, one-vote formula remains in the draft legislation.

He also said Jordanian expatriates will not be able

to cast their vote because there are neither enough embassies nor a large number of citizens living abroad.

A government source said that the draft will not increase the number of deputies and will maintain a ban on voting for army and police personnel as well as members of the judiciary.

The source, who asked not to be named, said voters will be allowed to cast their ballot at any polling station within their constituency "in order to make voting procedure as easy as possible."

According to the current law, voters must cast their ballot at the polling station where they are registered.

The new draft law appoints a judicial body to supervise the elections, a key demand by the opposition.

Under the present law, the Ministry of Interior supervises the ballot.

## Jerusalem committee condemns Israeli court decision on Awqaf property

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs (RCJA) Saturday blasted a recent decision by the Israeli district court denying Islamic courts in the occupied Palestinian territories the right to issue or document title deeds of land and other property as part of the "Islamic endowment."

RCJA Secretary General Abdullah Kanaan said the Israeli court decision "should not only be condemned but should be considered null and void in form and content."

The Israeli court ruled in favour of Farhan Khabib, a Jerusalem citizen, who had appealed to the Israeli court to retrieve property he donated to the Islamic Awqaf (Endowment) in 1981.

The Islamic Awqaf Council in Jerusalem, which said Awqaf property cannot be given back or sold under Islamic law, warned that the measure indicates that Israel plans to take over Islamic property.

Since 1967, the Israeli courts have refrained from interfering in cases involving the Islamic Awqaf in Palestine, but the court's decision is considered a precedent that would allow Israel in the future to take over Islamic property in Palestine.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Mr. Kanaan said the decision is illegal because it was passed by a court that has no jurisdiction in Awqaf property affairs.

"The [Israeli] court's ruling

constitutes a flagrant infringement on the Islamic court's jurisdiction in the occupied Arab territories, where the Awqaf property is under the control of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Jordan," stressed Mr. Kanaan.

"The Israeli court decision is considered a violation of international laws and U.N. resolutions, which state that Israel should refrain from taking measures that would create religious, demographic or other changes in the occupied Palestinian lands," he added.

Palestinians estimate that at least 90 per cent of the property within the walls of the old city of Jerusalem is registered religious endowment, both Islamic and Christian.

Should the Israeli court decision be implemented, they say, most of the property would become vulnerable to arbitrary decisions issued by the Israeli authorities.

Mr. Kanaan said the ruling is part of the Jewish state's ongoing drive to Judaize the Arab city in total violation of peace treaties and accords and in contravention of international law.

Mr. Kanaan said the world community should exercise pressure on Israel to prevent it from committing acts that would harm the cause of peace, security and stability in the region and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their rights, including self-determination and the creation of an independent state, in their homeland.

## Continued peace process deadlock will lead to further violence — Ensour

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour Saturday warned that the continued deadlock in the Middle East peace process is certain to lead to further tragedies in the occupied Palestinian territories, which are currently witnessing violence triggered by the killing of three Palestinian workers last Tuesday.

In remarks to the Voice of Palestine Radio, Dr. Ensour said: "We in Jordan are sounding the alarm that patience is wearing thin, and unless the Israeli authorities declare their real intentions and unless they take practical and specific steps — not mere words to improve the image of the Israeli government — we

fear that major incidents might take place in the occupied Arab territories."

"The Israeli government should realise that the Palestinian side cannot be contained and that the Palestinians must have real hope that would help put matters in perspective," he added.

Referring to His Majesty King Hussein's current visit to the U.S., Dr. Ensour said the King will hold intensive talks with President Bill Clinton on reviving the peace process, which is facing "serious difficulties."

"These efforts come upon the request of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, who has asked the King to contribute toward this end in view of his strong ties with the U.S. administration and

Congress," according to Dr. Ensour.

He noted the King's recent visits to several Arab countries and his talks with their leaders, as well as HRH Crown Prince Hassan's trips to Ramallah and Tel Aviv, saying that it is important that the peace process be resumed and the commitments on the second stage of the Palestinian-Israeli accords be fulfilled to pave the way for the third phase.

Dr. Ensour said King Hussein is fully informed on the difficulties in the occupied Palestinian lands and the escalation of violence on the part of the Israeli occupation authorities against Palestinian citizens.

The King will also discuss

these issues with Mr. Clinton and other leaders in Washington, he added.

As for the Iraq question, Dr. Ensour said the King will submit specific ideas but will not mediate between the two sides.

"Our policy in Jordan is not to mediate between Arab and foreign states, since the Kingdom is naturally biased toward solving our Arab brothers' problems regardless of their nature," he said.

He said the U.S. has supported the recent U.N.-Iraq accord on weapons inspections, "and this bodes well and gives us hope that the King's talks in the U.S. will focus on easing the tension that had escalated in the past few months."



TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN OPENS: Haya Arts Centre Director Nabih Rival opens a two-day training programme Saturday for children on the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The programme is organised by the National Task Force for Children in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (Petra photo)

## Arab transport union opens meeting tomorrow

AMMAN (Petra) — The Arab Union of Land Transport (AULT) board and general assembly will open a meeting in Amman tomorrow with the participation of 64 delegates representing companies in 11 Arab countries.

AULT Secretary General Ahmad Abul Saud said the delegates will review the union's plan of action, study a report on last year's activities, and elect a new 17-member board to serve for the next four years.

The AULT, which was founded by the Council of Arab Economic Unity in 1979, groups representatives of various land transport organisations in the Arab World as well as public sector companies in Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Lebanon, Kuwait, Palestine and Yemen.

According to Mr. Abul Saud, the union aims at coordinating the efforts of its members and providing them with assistance to promote land transport operations and facilitate the transportation of goods and travellers within Arab countries.

The union provides expertise and helps land transport firms conclude bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements for the purpose of achieving inter-Arab transport integration, he added.

Citing some examples of AULT activities, Mr. Abul Saud said the union was instrumental in helping land transport companies in Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia conclude agreements on coordinating their operations in the past few years.

The union has recently issued a "unified travel book" for vehicles operating within Arab countries, he said, noting that the book will be submitted to the Arab Transport Ministers Council for approval and could be ready by early next year.

## Ma'an deputies threaten to resign over ongoing security activities in city

By Tareq Ayyoub  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Lower House deputies from the southern governorate of Ma'an Saturday said they plan to resign if security agencies did not stop harassing their constituents following last month's pro-Iraq unrest.

"Most families in Ma'an are living a nightmare because of the daily threats from the various security agencies," said Walid Awajan, one of three Ma'an deputies in the 80-seat House.

"Though the unrest is over, mass arrests are continuing each day and police vehicles are present on all roads leading to the city," he told the Jordan Times.

"We, the deputies of Ma'an, have agreed that if we are not able to do something for our people there, then we might resign," Dr. Awajan said.

The two other Ma'an deputies, Ahmad Khatib and Nayif Abu Hlail, were not immediately available for comment on his remarks.

On Feb. 28, the government lifted a six-day curfew and pulled the army out of Ma'an after violent protests

over U.S. threats to bomb Iraq. One man, Mohammad Abdullah Khatib, 22, was killed in the unrest and over 20 others, mostly policemen, were injured.

Despite the army pullout, the government maintained a heavy security presence to guard against possible violence.

The government said Khatib was shot from behind by a rioter, a charge denied by Ma'an residents who insisted that he was killed when police opened fire at the demonstrators.

During the week-long curfew, the army carried out house-to-house searches and seized over 500 weapons.

Government sources said that of the over 200 people arrested on suspicion of inciting and taking part in the unrest, 18 remained in detention pending trial by the State Security Court.

"Every day we have people arrested in the city for no reason," said Dr. Awajan, adding that the arrest warrants were issued by the court.

In addition, Dr. Awajan said the names of 72 others have been kept on a police list and they could be arrested at any time.

"Ironically, some names on this list belong to people who passed away in 1996 and 1994," he said.

"We believe that the whole thing is a matter of settling scores," he said.

The government has denied such charges and said it was working within the boundaries of law.

Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid Saturday said he was not aware of any such arrests and stressed that even if they took place, his ministry was not involved.

"The interrogation process of those who were arrested is going on," he said. "But if any arrests took place in the past few days, it might be for judicial reasons or upon orders from the court," Mr. Rashid told the Jordan Times.

But Mr. Awajan charged that Mr. Rashid was behind the new security campaign against the city.

"The interior minister is escalating the situation. He is responsible for what is happening," Mr. Awajan said.

"Every family in Ma'an feels that they are targeted by security authorities. We do not feel secure," he explained.

Dr. Awajan said it was difficult to say how many people remained in detention because "we have people who are arrested everyday and houses that are searched every now and then."

"Our demands are clear," he said. "We want all detainees to be released, we want an end to mass arrests and to the campaign against the city," Dr. Awajan said.

The government, responding to directives issued by King Hussein, last week released 29 detainees.

Meanwhile, the head of the Lower House Public Freedoms Committee, Mohammad Azyadeh, said at least 15 Ma'an residents were arrested over the past three days.

Mr. Azyadeh, a deputy representing the Madaba governorate, said his commission received information from Ma'an deputies that the new arrests occurred a day after the 29 detainees were released from Zarqa's Berain jail.

He and several deputies will visit the jail Sunday to examine the conditions of "political detainees" held there, especially those held in connection with the Ma'an riots.

## Human rights training programme opens Tuesday

AMMAN (J.T.) — The European Commission (EC) is sponsoring a regional training programme for trainers in the field of human rights with the aim of promoting a culture of human rights in the Arab World by enlarging the foundation of Arab non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and ensuring their access to new communication and training techniques, according to a press statement by the EC delegation in Amman.

The programme, funded by the EC's MEDA Democracy Programme, will be carried out by the Tunis-based Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR), the statement said Saturday.

The first phase of the programme will take place in Amman on Tuesday, where participants representing NGOs from 12 Arab countries will identify training needs and objectives in the field of human rights, the statement added.

It said that in the long term, the programme aims to promote human rights in Arab countries through the development of human and institutional resources of related NGOs and similar civil society institutions.

In the short term, the state-

ment added, the programme will form a team of trainers to assist the AIHR in the preparation, presentation and evaluation of training programmes organised either by the institute or by national NGOs. Throughout the programme, the circle of beneficiaries of human rights education and awareness training will continue to be expanded.

The Amman component is organised in collaboration with the Jordan chapter of the Arab Organisation of Human Rights, according to the statement. A follow-up phase will be held in Tunis in August 1998, and the third and final evaluation phase is scheduled for February 1999 in Egypt.

The MEDA Democracy Programme was established in 1996 on the initiative of the European Parliament, following the November 1995 Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona.

The aims are to apply the principles enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, particularly in the political field. The programme also focuses on support for measures to promote democracy, the rule of law, civil and socio-economic rights and the protection of vulnerable groups.

## Annual 'Francophonie Week' kicks off

By Jean-Claude Elias  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A series of cultural events through March 20 will mark what has now become a yearly tradition since 1988 — the week of the "Francophonie."

The term represents not only the countries where French is either the main language or is widely spoken, but also all social groups and communities that speak it, even in countries or areas where it is a third or a fourth language.

At a press conference held last week, Bernard Bajeot, the French ambas-

sador to Jordan, introduced the events of the week. Also present were Gian Federico Pedotti, the Swiss ambassador, Michael Molloy, the Canadian ambassador, and other diplomats, each of whom explained the role and importance of the French language in their respective country.

The cultural week is organised by the French Cultural Centre in cooperation with the embassies of Bulgaria, Canada, Egypt, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Romania, Switzerland and Tunisia. It is worth noting that despite the fact that French is not widely spoken in Jordan, it has won a

particularly important place in schools and in the media, with substantial airtime on the national radio and television networks.

Moreover, the Higher Education Council decided in October 1996 to further strengthen the role of French in the Kingdom by making it an official optional subject in the Tawjihi secondary examination.

On Monday, Swiss writer Gaston Cherpillod will present a conference on his works. This event, as well as most of those of the week, will take place at Amman City Hall in Ras Al Ain.

During the week, Belgian

artist Paul de Gobert will create an original and large mural fresco comprising 30 windows, based on a blend of Jordanian and French landscapes. A tales illustration competition for school-children has also been organised and the winner will receive his or her prize on Friday at a special ceremony at Amman City Hall.

French and Canadian films will also be shown, and last but not least, the celebrated French jazz trio Emmanuel Bex will perform Sunday at the Méridien Hotel. Bex is a specialist of the famous "Hammond" organ sound.

## Cabinet approves \$55m World Bank loan

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers Saturday approved a \$55 million World Bank loan to finance the management and development of the country's water and sewage systems.

A statement issued after the meeting said the project aims at making more water resources available and distributing water more effectively around the country.

During Saturday's regular session, the Council decided to reallocate JD413,000 from Ministry of Planning funds to finance an infrastructure plan in the Petra region, the development of the Karak Castle area, and a tourist site terminal in Jerash. The funds will also finance a project to con-

trol floods in the Petra region and road networks in the adjacent Taybeh and Wadi Mousa regions.

The Cabinet approved Jordan's participation in the Arab schools sports tournament, which is due to be held in Rabat from Sept. 5 to 15, and participation in an international conference on customs to be held in Brussels between March 16 and 31.

The Council of Ministers approved the formation of a delegation led by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) director general to conduct talks in Ireland between March 18 and 21 on air transport between Jordan and Ireland. The meeting also approved participation in

talks with Dutch officials on March 18 and 19 on the development of water resources. The Dutch government is currently financing two studies on Middle East regional cooperation in water affairs, which are expected to be completed in the second half of this year.

The Council formed a delegation to be led by the chairman of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to take part in an international meeting on development of public administration systems, due to open in Denmark on April 23.

The CSC is charged with recruiting employees and workers for the public sector's ministries and departments.



## China, S. Korea meet ahead of peace talks

GENEVA (AFP) — Delegates from China and South Korea met here Saturday to prepare for talks with North Korea and the United States later in the day ahead of formal four-party negotiations.

The delegates made no statements before the start of the meeting which was held in a building provided by Switzerland, the host country.

The North Koreans were expected to arrive in Geneva around noon, informed sources said.

The four-nation meeting Saturday afternoon was to prepare for formal talks to be held in Geneva Monday.

U.S. and North Korean officials have qualified as "useful" and "positive" preparatory peace talks that were held in Berlin Friday.

An historic first session between the four belligerents in the 1950-53 conflict was held in Geneva last

December, beginning a process aimed at reaching a peace accord to replace the 1953 armistice which never formally ended the war.

A joint statement following that session said the parties had "successfully inaugurated the negotiating process to achieve a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula ... in a cordial and productive atmosphere."

The China-South Korea meeting here Saturday was originally to have been held in Beijing last month, but was cancelled after the change of government in Seoul when former dissident Kim Dae-jung was elected president.

Mr. Kim favours rapprochement with the north and resumption of direct dialogue between the two Koreas following an abortive initial attempt in 1994.

Seoul has promised to

deliver 50,000 tonnes of much-needed cereals to the north, in the throes of a crippling three-year famine caused by drought and floods.

Washington recently made known it would propose, at Monday's four-party talks, confidence-building measures as a first step towards reducing tensions between North and South, which still clash in isolated border skirmishes.

At Friday's meeting in Berlin, U.S. and North Korean delegates went over bilateral dossiers, particularly that of the export of North Korean missiles.

Missile export negotiations were broken off by Pyongyang last August and, despite talks in New York in November, were never resumed.

North Korea for its part wants the U.S. to lift post-war economic sanctions imposed 48 years ago.

## Clinton avoided old friend for fear of press

WASHINGTON (R) — Bill Clinton avoided a childhood friend for years after he became president because he was worried that their story would be sold to a tabloid magazine, according to court papers.

Contradictory accounts of the relationship came to light Friday in court documents released by lawyers for Paula Jones, who is suing Mr. Clinton for sexual harassment.

The friend, Dolly Kyle Browning, said in a declaration that she and Mr. Clinton met when she was 11, went to high school together and had sex occasionally between the mid-1970s and January 1992, when Mr. Clinton took office.

Mr. Clinton, in his own account, said he had avoided her because in 1992 she declined to deny a story that Star magazine was planning to print about their relationship.

When they met again at a school reunion in 1994, Ms. Browning seemed angry with him for ignoring her advances over the years and he was worried by her agitated behaviour, Mr. Clinton said.

Mr. Clinton, who was governor of Arkansas until 1992, was also worried she might be serious about writing a book about a woman who has a love affair with a southern governor.

Patching together the two accounts, which vary on many key points, it appears that Mr. Clinton and Ms. Browning were good friends until the 1992 presidential campaign.

They exchanged letters and she sent Mr. Clinton small presents. She said they met from time to time and sometimes had sex.

The rift came during the campaign after reporter Peter Williams of Star called her for information about the relationship. She asked advice of her brother, who was working for Mr. Clinton's campaign in New Hampshire at the time.

She never got through to Mr. Clinton and her brother, Walter Kyle, advised her to deny unspecified aspects of the story. "Finally I said look, if Billy (Clinton) wants me to

deny the story, all he has to do is get on the phone and personally ask me to deny the last thirty years of my life," she said.

"You might record the conversation," she quoted her brother as replying. "He said: 'If you cooperate with him (Williams), we will destroy you,'" she added. Mr. Clinton never called.

Mr. Clinton, writing about his meeting with Ms. Browning at the reunion two years later, said: "I explained to Dolly that I hadn't called back because I knew her husband was trying to peddle some false story about us to a tabloid... she hadn't told the tabloid that the story was false."

"I said that later I had seen a copy of a letter she was writing telling the tabloid not to publish the story because it was false and that I appreciated that," he added.

But Mr. Clinton did not feel he had appeased Ms. Browning at the reunion meeting. "She kept chewing me out for not calling her back and not trusting her," he said.

"I pointed out how we had been friends since she was a young girl... she basically said she didn't want me to be her friend and she was mad at me because I hadn't been her lover."

Mr. Clinton wrote a careful account of the conversation a few days later in case anything came of it. "I just thought for my protection when I saw the kind of look she had in her eyes and the way she was behaving... I wasn't paranoid like this until things like this occurred," he said.

Mr. Clinton said aide Marsha Scott listened to the whole conversation and endorsed in writing Mr. Clinton's account. Ms. Browning said the conversation was private because of the loud music, although two bodyguards may have caught some words.

Ms. Browning said that after the reunion meeting she and Mr. Clinton reached a deal through intermediaries. "The deal" was that I agreed not to tell the true story about our relationship if he would not tell any lies about me," she said.

## Times joins criticisms of 'filthy' British capital

LONDON (AFP) — London's "cool Britannia" image is being severely tarnished by its filthy streets, The Times reported Saturday.

The paper, citing a new tourist guide to London by the Lonely Planet, said the contrast with cities in continental Europe was depressing.

"Few other big cities are as dirty," the tourist guide book, often referred to as the backpackers' bible, described the British capital as dirty, expensive and a victim of its own "cool Britannia" hype.

It said Oxford Street had "spivvy shopfront salesmen offering dubious bargains." Piccadilly Circus was "fume choked and pretty uninteresting," and a nightingale would be unlikely to be heard singing in Berkeley Square because of the traffic din.

It described restaurant prices as "absolutely horrific." It also condemned the capital's "litter-strewn streets" and said the underground rail network can turn into a black hole in summer.

The Times said in an editorial that many of the guide's criticisms hit home, even though London welcomed more than 13 million tourists a year despite its climate, cuisine and the strength of sterling.

It said the underground was crowded, fetid and in desperate need of cash. It said pedestrians were choked with traffic fumes and gourmet with the size of restaurant bills. "And London surpasses all other capitals in one dismal respect, it is filthy," the paper added.

"The contrast with continental Europe was depressing... Few other big cities are as dirty."

London's stonework may be golden, "but the tourist treads historic trails through grime that has lain there as long," it added.



A military jury acquitted Sgt. Maj. Gene McKinney, formerly the U.S. Army's highest-ranking enlisted soldier, of all but one of 19 court-martial charges he faced. McKinney, shown speaking to reporters outside his lawyer's office in Alexandria on May 7, 1997, with his wife Wilbermina, was found guilty on one count of obstructing justice but not guilty of all the others, including all the sexual misconduct charges (Reuters photo)

## Former top army soldier gets mixed verdict in sex case

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A military jury handed down a mixed verdict Friday in the sexual misconduct case of the army's former top enlisted soldier, finding him guilty of obstruction of justice but not of sexually harassing or assaulting female service members.

The eight member panel — six men and two women — cleared Sergeant Major Gene McKinney, the first African American promoted to the post of all but one of the 19 charges brought against him.

After three days of deliberation, the jury found Mr. McKinney "wrongfully impeded the criminal investigation" when he urged one of his accusers, Staff Sergeant Christine Fetrow, to tell army investigators that there was "no inappropriate behavior" in his behaviour with her.

Ms. Fetrow, who alleged Mr. McKinney grabbed and propositioned her in his locked Pentagon office, tape-recorded the telephone conversation at the request of army investigators, providing the prosecution the only concrete evidence of wrongdoing.

But the jury rejected 18 other counts against Mr. McKinney, including adultery, assault and sexual harassment charges.

The sentencing phase of the trial begins Monday. The obstruction of justice charge carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison, forfeiture of pay, reduction in rank to private and a dishonourable discharge.

The verdict is an awkward one for the army, which was embarrassed by allegations against Sgt. Maj. McKinney but aggressively pursued them at a time when the service was under fire for a major sex scandal involving drill sergeants and female recruits at its training schools.

The army said it was "inappropriate" to comment on the McKinney verdict until the sentencing phase of the trial was completed.

During the five-week trial, the panel was given radically contrasting portrayals of the 47-year-old McKinney.

In the defence's portrait, Sgt. Maj. McKinney was a 29-year veteran who climbed out of poverty to scale the heights of the U.S. military establishment only to find himself wrongfully accused by vengeful females.

To the prosecution, Sgt. Maj. McKinney was a man who once he got to the top abused his position of power to pressure women for sex.

Six women, all of them white and all but one of lesser rank, came forward to accuse Mr. McKinney of sexual misconduct.

They told of crude advances, of being groped and kissed, of Mr. McKinney's extravagant boasts of sexual prowess, and of his using the death of his 18-year-old son to gain sympathy. All but one fended off the sergeant major's advances.

Sergeant Christine Roy claimed she had sexual intercourse with Mr. McKinney under pressure at his official residence at a time when she was seven months pregnant.

"This case is about abuse of power," said Lieutenant Colonel Michael Child, the army prosecutor, in his closing arguments Tuesday. "It's about the highest enlisted soldier in the army abusing the power and responsibility that were given to him."

Mr. McKinney's lawyer, Charles Gittins, emphasised Sgt. Maj. McKinney's previously unblemished record of achievement, a rise from poor roots to a post that made him the adviser on enlisted affairs to the army chief of staff.

"In military law, character does count and character alone may be enough to cause reasonable doubt," he said in his closing argument.

Mr. Gittins, who attacked the credibility and character of Sgt. Maj. McKinney's accusers during the trial, called them "liars, cheats and admitted frauds."

## Britain's Conservatives slam embassy invite for Sinn Fein

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's opposition Conservatives have criticised a decision to invite Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams to a British embassy lunch in Washington marking Saint Patrick's Day on March 17, reports said Saturday.

A British government source said Friday that the embassy would play host to parties from both sides of the Northern Ireland divide at the lunch.

The invitation by new Ambassador Christopher Meyer is the first for Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, from the embassy and is an indication of the new spirit of reconciliation between Sinn Fein and London, according to the source.

However, Andrew Mackay, the Conservatives' Northern Ireland spokesman, said the invitation was "regrettable." The Times said in its Saturday

edition. "What message will this invitation give to the people of America when it is known that Sinn Fein IRA are using the Adams trip to raise funds from America?" Mr. Mackay asked.

He suggested the ambassador was acting on the "instructions of his political masters."

Downing Street officials had earlier said the decision was taken by the ambassador and was "a decision with which we entirely agree. We would expect all parties involved in the talks process to be treated equally with regard to the St. Patrick's Day event."

In the past, the British embassy in Washington has pressured the United States to refuse Adams visas to prevent him visiting on fund-raising and publicity trips.

But since the IRA declared a ceasefire in July, allowing Sinn Fein to meet

a condition of non-violence and enter the current talks on Northern Ireland's future, Sinn Fein has visited Prime Minister Tony Blair three times.

Such encounters were the first meetings between a British premier and Sinn Fein in Downing Street since 1921.

Saint Patrick's Day — honouring Ireland's patron saint — is celebrated by the Irish across the world.

This time, representatives of all participants in the peace process are invited to the White House for a party, attended by President Bill Clinton. British Northern Ireland Minister Mo Mowlam was expected to attend that gathering.

Sinn Fein was recently excluded for two weeks from the talks after the IRA was linked to two recent murders. The party was allowed back in from Monday and is expected to rejoin on March 23.

## Armenia's election also-rans ... or kingmakers

YEREVAN (AFP) — Presidential hopefuls Vazgen Manukian and Sergei Badalian are unlikely to taste glory in Armenia's looming election, but their influence will not end when the polls close Monday evening, analysts believe.

Although Mr. Manukian, a former prime minister and perennial presidential candidate, and Communist Party candidate Mr. Badalian figure among the also-rans, they both represent significant slices of the electorate, which could make the difference should the elections go to a second round.

Monday's vote is likely to favour acting President Robert Kocharian and Soviet-era chief Karen Demirchian, but if neither candidate scores more than 50 per cent of the vote in a first round featuring 12 candidates, a second round runoff will bring the two together in a head-to-head.

"For me it is a question of Kocharian or Demirchian," said Nordin, a taxi driver, expressing a sentiment common in the capital. "I will make up my mind in the next few days."

Mr. Manukian, 51, who stood against former president Levon Ter-Petrosian in the last presidential elections that ended with furious fraud allegations and tanks on the streets of

Yerevan, is seen as the candidate of the Armenian intelligentsia and dissident movement.

A former dissident himself — he spent time in Moscow's notorious Matrosskaya Tishina prison — his platform is almost identical to that of Karabakh war-hero Kocharian.

But Mr. Manukian, who had to flee into hiding after the explosive 1996 election, is also viewed as the perpetual opposition candidate, only at his best, when taking a stand against an issue.

"Vazgen is not seen to be a leader by the people," said one Western diplomat. "He is best in the opposition."

Since Mr. Manukian's constituency is very similar to Mr. Kocharian's, his votes could be crucial if the presidential polls proceed to a second round runoff.

"It can't be ruled out that Manukian will give his votes to Kocharian in the second round, but he will not do this yet because each of the four candidates believes in his own chances," said political analyst Artur Bagdasarian.

Mr. Badalian, a physicist by training who has headed up the Armenian Communist Party since 1994, has not hinged much from a distant fourth in the opinion polls.

His candidacy, which

enjoys the endorsement of Russian Communist leaders Gennady Zyuganov and Gennady Seleznyov, has demonstrated the same lack of imagination as his television advertisement: drab documentary footage of Armenia during Soviet times with the Armenian Soviet anthem playing in the background.

Mr. Badalian suffers in comparison to the verve and charisma of his main rival, former Armenian Communist Party chief Demirchian, who has attracted the votes of those Armenians longing for a seemingly better Soviet past.

The Communists have refused to support the former Soviet chief's candidacy. "He's a traitor to our party, a political Judas who has just recently arrived on the political scene," said Mr. Badalian at a recent campaign rally.

But should the vote go to a second round, those who cast their ballots for Mr. Badalian could throw their weight behind Demirchian, despite the wishes of the party leadership.

The March 16 polls were called in Armenia after Mr. Ter-Petrosian resigned early last month as support for his policies on the Armenian-populated Azeri enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh crumbled.

## Court finds Russian youth guilty of six murders

VERSAILLES, France (AFP) — A French juvenile court early Saturday found a Russian youth, Alexi Polevoi, guilty of the 1995 murders of his millionaire father and five others and sentenced him to eight years in prison.

The verdict was announced in open court shortly before 1:00 a.m. (0000 GMT) after three hours of deliberation.

The prosecutor, Sylvie Lottreau, had demanded a sentence of 18-20 years.

Polevoi, 19, was found guilty after a 10-day closed door trial that raised questions on possible Russian mafia involvement in the killings.

Lawyers acting for Polevoi expressed their "incomprehension" of both the finding and the sentence.

"For someone who is innocent, eight years in prison is unacceptable," said one of his lawyers, Henri Leclerc.

The youth was 16 when he initially confessed to shooting his father Yevgeny, his stepmother and four other Russians in the rich western Paris suburb of Louveciennes.

But several months later

he gave investigators a different version. He said the killings were "guided" by a mysterious hooded "man in black" seeking "a red file" who forced him to finish off his father and warned him against talking, saying: "See what we're capable of."

Defence lawyers also brought in a series of character witnesses and argued that the theory of a mafia link was strengthened after Alexi's uncle Dimitri was shot dead ten months later in Belarus.

The argument was dismissed by prosecutors as "fantasy."

Described as one of the worst killings in contemporary French criminal history, the case seized media attention, with commentators and even a recent book speculating the Russian mafia may be at play.

Polevoi, who has been behind bars for three years waiting trial, was detained after saying he gunned down the six because he was "treated like a dog" and not allowed to see an older girlfriend.

In the plush Polevoi household, police on the night of Feb. 27 found the bodies of Yevgeny Polevoi,

a 42-year-old rich Russian businessman with high-level connections in the ex Soviet Union, his 40-year-old wife Ludmila, her parents, Fedor, a retired Red Army general aged 67, and his wife Zinaida, 65, and friends, Slava, 48, and Olga, 43.

They were shot with a .22-calibre rifle, a Kalashnikov and a revolver.

Alexi's three-year-old half-sister was found safe and sound asleep in bed.

Among questions raised by commentators and his lawyers are how the teenager could successfully eliminate so many people with the weapons. Slava was a former KGB agent, Yevgeny a big and powerful man. The grandparents' door had been broken down before their murder.

Police said that after executing the family, the teenager drove into Paris and spent time with a prostitute before alerting the police.

Alexi was enrolled in top private schools, with 10,000 francs (\$2,000) in monthly pocket money and his own flat and credit card.

## Taiwan China Airlines offers record compensation for crash victims

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwan's China Airlines (CAL) has offered eight million Taiwan dollars (\$250,000) compensation to each of the victims killed in the island's worst air disaster last month, company spokesman Steve Yang said.

A CAL Airbus passenger plane ploughed into a row of civilian houses outside Chiang Kai-Shek International Airport on Feb. 16 killing 182 passengers and 14 crew on board as well as six people on the ground.

The 14 crew were not included in the offer because the airline has another compensation system for employees who died at work, Mr. Yang added.

the relatives of those died in the crash" by offering such a large amount of compensation, Mr. Yang said.

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The 14 crew were not included in the offer because the airline has another compensation system for employees who died at work, Mr. Yang added.

Mr. Yang said there had been no immediate objection or approval from relatives who joined airline officials in a first round of negotiations for compensation.

"If there is any objection to the offer, we will continue talking to the relatives," Mr. Yang said.

But one relative, Li Feng-mao, who attended the negotiations, voiced discontent at the offer saying representatives of the families of the victims were to form a self-help group to fight for their rights and bene-

fits. The cause of the fatal crash remains to be determined but the government has demanded that CAL take action to upgrade safety.

Tuesday, the Transportation and Communications Ministry asked the former flag-carrier to lay off 71 officials, including Honorary Chairman Wu Yueh, three senior flight security officials, and advisors from here and abroad.

The Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) last week announced the creation

of a special task force to direct and supervise CAL reforms.

"The special task force would stay with China Airlines for at least one year to conduct daily reviews and inspections of the company safety controls," CAA Director-General Tsai Tui said.

CAL's turnover for 1997 was expected to rise 5.7 per cent to 55.8 billion Taiwan dollars (\$1.69 billion).

Local analysts said it was "unlikely" the company would meet the targeted \$65.8 billion for 1998 after the disaster.





U.S. helicopter pilot Hugh Thompson (left) and door gunner Lawrence Colburn are surrounded by schoolchildren during a visit to My Lai village in Vietnam. Thompson and Colburn were awarded the prestigious Soldier's Medal for placing themselves between the rampaging American troops and civilians in the South Vietnamese village of My Lai on March 16, 1968 during the Vietnam war (Reuters photo)

## Vietnam veterans, survivors revisit My Lai massacre

MY LAI, Vietnam (R) — Bewilderment reigned and tears flowed Saturday as people from both sides of the 1968 My Lai massacre revisited the site, stirring memories of one of the Vietnam war's most shocking incidents.

"It's rewarding (to be back), it's happy, and it's very sad," said Hugh Thompson, pilot of a U.S. helicopter whose crew tried to halt the carnage on that day. "I've come close to breaking down twice today and I don't want to do that, but I can't control it."

Capt. Thompson, 51, together with his former door gunner Lawrence Colburn, were brought back by a U.S. television network this weekend to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the massacre here — an event widely viewed as one of the most shameful in American military history.

On the morning of March 16, 1968, as hundreds of villagers were being slaughtered beneath them, the two men swooped down to place their chopper directly in the line of fire between the marauding GIs and fleeing civilians.

Together with a colleague, who died a few weeks later, they loaded people on to the chopper and flew them to safety. In the carnage below some 500 other civilians had been killed.

"There were too many helicopters in the sky, I didn't even dare to look up," said Phan Thi Nhanh, one of those who was rescued from the bloodbath. "I knew about war, but on that day everything suddenly rushed into chaos. It was all out of control."

Ms. Nhanh, who at the time was just 14 years old, said she feared being deliberately thrown from the helicopter into the sea. Instead she was returned to her village later in the day, where for the first time she realised the extent of the atrocity.

"As for those people who rescued me I consider them

## Ukraine supports Malaysia's bid for non-permanent U.N. security seat

KUALA LUMPUR, (AFP) — Ukraine agreed Saturday to support Malaysia's bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for a two-year period from 1999.

"In view of our friendly relation with Malaysia, I do not see any problems to support the candidacy of Malaysia," said Ukraine's Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko, who is currently president of the 52nd session of the U.N. General Assembly.

He said agreement would have to be obtained from Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma.

"I need to send a written report and to receive a written confirmation," Mr. Udovenko said. But he added: "In the case of Malaysia, at this stage, I can say we will support Malaysia's candidacy 100 per cent."

Mr. Udovenko, who arrived here Thursday for a three-day official visit, is to have talks with Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi after earlier meeting Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad and Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

A Malaysian official said high on the foreign ministers' talks agenda was Malaysia's push for quicker reforms in the U.N. Security Council, and nudging the General Assembly president to collect outstanding dues from the "big powers."

Mr. Udovenko also said the U.N.'s financial position was critical. He said U.N. chief Kofi Annan had been forced to borrow money from the budget for peacekeeping operations to pay salaries and bills.

"He did not have any other choice," he said.

"Certainly now, everything depends on the position of the United States," he added. Washington owes the U.N. \$1.7 billion in unpaid dues.

The Ukrainian foreign minister refused to comment on a recent Malaysian court decision allowing a defamation suit to proceed against a U.N. special reporter. "I have been advised by my advisors that I am recommending not to comment by the U.N. headquarters because it is still under investigation," Mr. Udovenko said.

Malaysia's Param Kumaraswamy, the U.N. special reporter on the independence of judges and lawyers, is being sued by two Malaysian firms over an interview about the Malaysian judiciary he gave to a British magazine in 1995.

Mr. Udovenko was to leave for Tokyo late Saturday.

## Russian deputies could discuss START II treaty before summer

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian lawmakers could consider the START II nuclear disarmament treaty by the summer, senior parliamentary figures said Saturday, ending a six-year impasse which has left the accord in abeyance.

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the lower house State Duma would present deputies with a draft bill to ratify the treaty during the current parliamentary session ending in June, its chairman Vladimir Lukin told Interfax.

"More and more deputies, including those in the (Communist) opposition, are starting to realise that ratification of START II is in Russia's interests," said Mr. Lukin.

Fellow committee member Eduard Vorobyov, from the reformist Russia's Choice party, said it was reasonable for Washington to link ratification with the opening of talks on a START III disarmament treaty, Interfax reported.

START II, which provides for a two-thirds reduction in nuclear arsenals, was ratified by the U.S. Senate in January 1996 but in Moscow Communist and nationalist deputies have blocked the accord which they say disadvantages Russia.

U.S. President Bill Clinton reiterated Friday that the Duma must ratify START II before he would consider attending a summit in Moscow later this year.

Nevertheless, Washington has held out the carrot of initial talks on the next round of disarmament talks. Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev said Friday his U.S. counterpart William Cohen had proposed initiating expert consultations for a START III treaty.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin last month urged deputies to urgently approve the deal, but opposition deputies charge its strict application would lead to a new imbalance in strategic nuclear forces in Washington's favour.

Under the terms of START II, Russia must destroy all its SS-18 multiple warhead ballistic missiles, but the opposition is demanding a supplementary accord with the United States to tackle the problem to redress the balance.

"In order to reach parity (with the United States) we would have to develop a new type of single warhead missile," said Mr. Vorobyov.

"Why destroy one type of missile in order to create another, if the overall objective in relations between Russia and the United States in this area is a further decrease in nuclear confrontation?"

Ratification has also been complicated by the row over NATO enlargement into the former East Europe, while some deputies recently threatened to block the treaty if the United States launched air raids against Iraq during a stand-off over U.N. weapons inspections.

Despite the optimism of the foreign affairs committee's reformist wing, former General Lev Rokhlin, chairman of the Duma's defence committee, remains an implacable opponent of the accord.

He has demanded the government publish a detailed costing of the treaty's application.

## U.S. to stop seeking China rights censure

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton has decided that the United States will end a long campaign to win a U.N. resolution censuring China for human rights abuses, the Washington Post reported Saturday.

Quoting unidentified senior administration officials, the newspaper said the decision had been made amid signs that the Beijing government was gradually changing its repressive practices and might be ready to release other political dissidents from prison.

The officials told the post that China, despite continued abuses, deserved credit for freeing dissident Wei Jingsheng last year and for agreeing Thursday to sign an international covenant committing the government to support universal standards of political and religious freedom.

But the Clinton administration was clearly expecting more tangible concessions from Beijing in exchange for giving up the annual U.S. effort to have the U.N. human rights commission in Geneva approve an official condemnation of China, the report said.

The Post quoted officials as saying they were confident China would release prominent dissidents in the near term, with their hopes focused on Wang Dan, in prison for his role in the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations.

Washington has not been given specific assurances about Mr. Wang's release, the Post said, but a senior U.S. official noted that, based on discussions with the Chinese, "we expect further releases."

## U.S. envoy plans new mission to Belgrade, Kosovo

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. envoy Robert Gelbard said Friday he plans to return to Belgrade and Kosovo next week to press for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Serbian province.

Mr. Gelbard hopes to follow up on his talks held last Monday with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to press him to accept international demands for an end to the violence and a negotiated settlement with Albanian separatists in Kosovo.

"I want to reinforce with Milosevic the urgency of positive movement," Mr. Gelbard told AFP.

The envoy, who has tentatively planned to leave here Tuesday, will also meet with Albanian leaders in Kosovo to discuss an agreement that calls for Albanian-language schools to reopen in the Serbian province.

His visit to the former Yugoslavia comes as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright prepares to host a meeting here, with her European counterparts, around March 25 on the situation in Kosovo.

The six-nation contact group agreed in London to impose an arms embargo on federal Yugoslavia and to seek further measures if the Serbian crackdown in Kosovo is not halted.

Mr. Gelbard was also expected to attend a regional summit on Kosovo that was expected to be attended by leaders from Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania and possibly Greece and Turkey.

At least 80 people have died this month in the Serbian police crackdown on Albanians, who make up 90 per cent of the population in Kosovo.

Friday, a crowd estimated at more than 50,000 ethnic Albanians, mostly students, staged a peaceful protest in Kosovo's capital Pristina against the Serbian regime and its police offensive in the troubled province.

Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova snubbed a Serbian delegation that was dispatched for talks in Pristina and called on Western powers, especially the United States and the European Union, to "support the aspiration of people in Kosovo for democracy and independence."

The United States has repeatedly said that Kosovo should be granted a high degree of autonomy but it has refused to back the Albanian secessionist cause.

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## Jordan Times

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### Move in wrong direction

THE GOVERNMENT'S plan to impose official controls on provident or savings funds is understandably causing an uproar among private sector employees and enterprises. The uproar was ignited by the publication last week of a draft law being proposed by the Central Bank of Jordan to "supervise" the management of funds whose assets are estimated at between JD250 million and JD500 million. Employees and management of private companies are opposed to any government intervention, since such a policy is the antithesis to all the declared policies of the government and the aspirations of the people.

The government was motivated by allegations that some of these funds were mismanaged. While they agree that some funds are not being operated in the best interest of their beneficiaries, opponents of the government's drive argue that there are better ways than creating another bureaucracy to ensure better handling of these funds. They would encourage a law that gives more supervisory powers to the subscribers to ensure more transparency and more say in investment decisions. They insist that these funds belong to civil society organisations and as such, should be managed, freely and solely, by the subscribers. They also argue that these funds are only in their teens and would mature with age and the advent of consultancy services and investment brokers. At a time when governments everywhere are turning to privatisation and encouraging the private sector to run the economy, it is puzzling that the Jordanian government should choose to proceed in this direction.

The beneficiaries of these funds are also disturbed by the government's intention to tax these funds by up to 30 per cent should any employee withdraw his or her savings from the fund before the age of 60. They say that that is ridiculous since salaries are taxed at the source and savings, therefore, should be tax-free.

Although the proposed law has yet to clear the Cabinet and Parliament, it already caused strong reactions from different employees. The Arab Bank, a leading employer, has already decided to close its fund and distribute the savings among its employees. Other companies are threatening to follow suit.

We, therefore, hope that the government reconsiders its intention and resorts to dialogue with companies and employees. Surely, the employees know their interests best and should have the final say in deciding how to save and what to do with their savings.

### ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said Saturday that the joint Israeli-Jordanian communiqué summing up the outcome of HIRH Crown Prince Hassan's visit to Israel was void of any sign that Israel is relenting in the questions of trade with the Palestinians as well as with Jordan and Egypt. The communiqué mentioned no change in the status quo, that is continued Israeli hegemony on the Palestinian economy, although it noted that any move to increase Jordan's trade with the Palestinians should be tackled at a tripartite meeting involving the Palestinians, the Jordanians and the Israelis, noted the writer. He said, apart from certain limited positive elements like Jordanian-Israeli cooperation in energy matters and supporting the idea of building a railway linking the Dead Sea and the Red Sea, the communiqué was void of any sign that Israel is ready to fully respect the peace accords with the Palestinians or to fully honour the peace treaty with Jordan. The writer said Prince Hassan went to Tel Aviv in good faith, and his address at the press conference was clear and to the point, tackling the basic outstanding issues, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was devious and non-committal.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Riham Farra said of the murder of three Palestinian workers on their way back home from work that the attack was part of a series of atrocities committed by the Israeli forces. Had the three killed in the incident been Jews and not Arabs, the Arab countries, the world community and all the allies of Israel would have described it as an act of terrorism and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat would have offered his apologies to the Jewish people, said the writer. Had the attack been on Israelis, Netanyahu would have unleashed his troops to again occupy Palestinian cities and would have announced that he was right in not accepting the Oslo accord and justified for not withdrawing his troops from the occupied West Bank, according to the writer. She said had those killed in the incident been Israeli citizens, Arafat would have been asked to offer major compromises and accept Israel's continued occupation of most of Palestine as the case is at present, or Netanyahu would have ordered his forces to commit a major massacre against the Arabs in retaliation. The writer said it is sad and depressing to see the Arabs falling silent in the face of Israel's continued atrocities and it is painful to see the aggressors pursuing their crimes with the world community condoning such actions.

### Sunday's Economic Pulse

## Government can make or break privatisation Strategic partner approach not justified

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

THE DETAILED speech delivered in the Jordanian Parliament by Dr. Jawad Anani, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, was meant to convince the representatives of the people in particular, and public opinion in general that privatisation is good for the country, and desirable from economic and social points of view.

This effort is supposed to be based on the conviction of the government itself, and its strong acceptance of privatisation policies and the necessity to push ahead in their implementation.

If things are so, we have every right to know why Jordan has been so slow to privatise its state-owned enterprises, and just exactly why we have been hearing a lot of noise by different governments about the concept for more than 10 years but have seen precious little accomplished during that period.

It would be better for Dr. Anani to admit that most ministers do not find privatisation feasible or desirable, and most Jordanian citizens reject the concept out of hand. This is the only explanation to why pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has not succeeded in seriously pushing the government in the direction of privatisation.

It is worth noting that the current deliberations in Parliament and its Finance Committee were initiated by the majority of the deputies who reject privatisation and seek to prevent its possible take off. Deliberations were not a result of an enthusiastic posture of the government trying to mobilise public opinion. In fact some deputies and citizens wish that deliberations in the Parliament conclude with a vote

of no-confidence in the minister concerned.

**... we have every right to know why Jordan has been so slow to privatise its state-owned enterprises, and just exactly why we have been hearing a lot of noise by different governments about the concept for more than 10 years but have seen precious little accomplished during that period.**

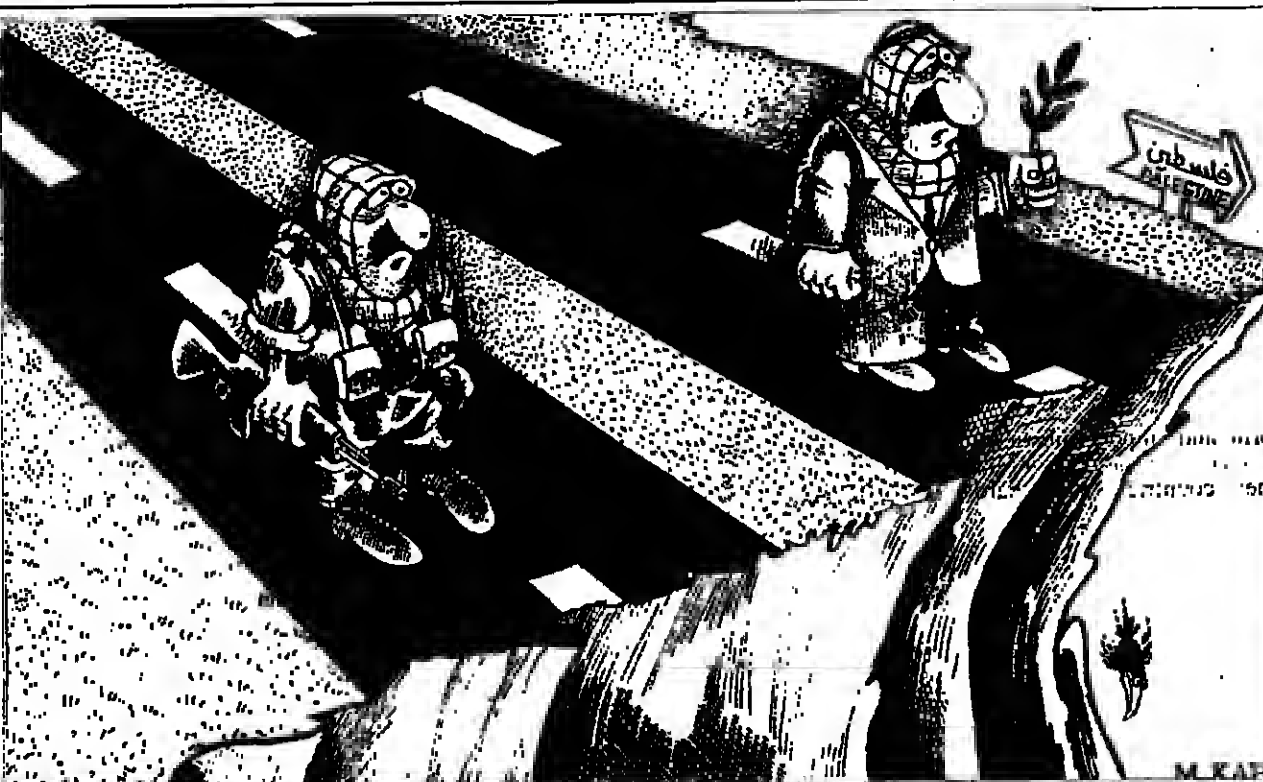
The first obstacle facing privatisation in Jordan was of the government's own making — it was unable to come up with a convincing list of priorities. The government started with the most difficult transactions, namely the Telecommunications Corporation, Jordan Electricity Authority, and other large scale strategic projects, while it hardly started

to sell off some of the shares it owns in industrial and services companies. As a matter of fact the government is holding firm and hanging tough on its majority shares in Al Ra'i newspaper and other papers in direct violation of the Press and Publications Law of 1993, an indicator that government does not mean business.

On the other hand, the government accepted the World Bank idea of foreign strategic partners, even in cases where such a formula is not called for, such as the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC), where a strategic partner may play havoc with the operations of the company as explained in an important memorandum by its board of directors addressed to the Ministry of Industry and Trade which the Finance Committee may like to look at.

Privatisation is obviously the order of the day. It is a general wave sweeping the globe, including socialist countries. Jordan cannot afford to lag behind for too long. However, it is of utmost importance to arrive at a privatisation agenda with the proper priorities. Equally important are the methods and the assurances to the parties concerned. Foreign investors should not be preferred over nationals, and privatisation should not be approached from an ideological viewpoint.

It is worth mentioning that the public sector enterprises that are candidates for privatisation do not contribute more than six per cent of the Jordanian gross domestic product (GDP). Thus, unlike other developing countries, Jordan has no big problem to solve, or an acute crisis to defuse, or for that matter an urgent situation to deal with.



## 'Give the U.N. the tools, and we will do the job'

By Kofi Annan

NEW YORK — When I became secretary general in January 1997, I pledged that I would revitalise the role of the United Nations and undertake top-to-bottom organisational reforms. I have kept my pledge.

Yet the United Nations, for all practical purposes, remains in a state of bankruptcy. Our doors are kept open only because other countries in essence provide interest-free loans to cover largely U.S.-created shortfalls — not only NATO allies like Britain, France, Italy and Canada, but also developing countries like Pakistan and even Fiji.

The United States has not paid its United Nations dues (\$1.3 billion) in full and on time for some years. In 1995 it paid less than half of its total assessment. These gaps have never been closed.

Who benefits from a cash-starved United Nations? The aggressors of the world whose designs we seek to foil: the violators of human rights whose abuses we endeavour to curtail; the drug dealers and international criminals whose dealings we reveal; the arms merchants whose traffic in deadly weapons our conventions help to stop. Also impeded is our humanitarian work, against hunger, deprivation, the loss of homes and livelihoods.

The Iraq crisis demonstrates how indispensable the United Nations can be in the areas of peace and

security. If it is honoured, the agreement that I negotiated in Baghdad will allow U.N. weapons inspectors to expand their search for and elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction — an outcome that alternative courses of action might not have yielded.

The public becomes aware of U.N. contributions to conflict resolution only occasionally, when a crisis erupts that thrusts us onto television screens and onto newspaper headlines. My recent trip to Baghdad was such an occasion.

**Our doors are kept open only because other countries in essence provide interest-free loans to cover largely U.S.-created shortfalls...**

But we have been there all along. As U.S. President Bill Clinton has stated on numerous occasions, unnamed U.N. inspectors have destroyed more weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in the past six years than Operation Desert Storm did.

U.N. Security Council resolutions have kept sanctions in place. The "oil-for-food" programme administered by the United Nations has sought to reduce the suffering of Iraqi civilians, especially women and children.

And when the international community determined

that diplomacy in Iraq deserved one last chance, the eyes of the world instinctively turned to the United Nations.

Institutional reforms are more difficult to portray to the public than crisis management. Under my reform package, we have achieved an actual decrease in the U.N. budget, down to \$2.53 billion for the 1998 and 1999 biennium. Nearly 1,000 posts have been cut outright, bringing the staff size below 9,000, and other jobs are being held vacant. Administrative expendi-

until recently Canada's deputy minister of defence, as first deputy secretary general; Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland, to lead our human rights efforts; Pino Arlacchi, a Mafia-hunting senator from Italy, to head our drug- and crime-prevention programmes; Klaus Töpfer, German urban development minister, to direct the environment programme; Jayantha Dhanapala of Sri Lanka, an arms control expert, who will head disarmament affairs and lead the special inspectors for presidential sites established in the Baghdad agreement.

There is a saying that all politics is local. But increasingly, all local politics has global consequences. And those global consequences in turn, affect the quality of local life everywhere. So a renewed partnership between the United Nations and the United States is in the interest of both. But it has to be paid for. To paraphrase what Winston Churchill said to Franklin Roosevelt: Give us the tools and we will do the job.

The writer is secretary general of the United Nations. This article was published in the New York Times the day prior to Mr. Annan's meeting with President Clinton in Washington to discuss not only Iraq, but also the debilitating problem of the \$1.3 billion in back dues that the United States owes to the United Nations.

Of course, people are more important than organisational structure. My recent appointments include Louise Frechette.

## LETTERS

### Ethics on the air

To the editor:

INCREASINGLY NOTICEABLE lately is the competition among a number of satellite channels in trying to win a wider audience through certain programmes that deal with subjects of current and historical interest. Those channels have been, for some time now, showing programmes hosting politicians, journalists, experts and academicians in a dialogue with a host doing his best to add his input to create a further sensation or embarrassment to those participating with him. Audiences are also encouraged, in some cases, to contribute by making direct telephone calls to the programme, but it is regrettable that some of these callers are using insulting or vulgar language or expressions. And since those programmes are staged live, on the air, without any kind of censorship, both participants and callers could abuse the time allocated to them.

I am sure that many of us have memories of particular cases when some of interviews nearly turned into fist fights or times when three or more participants would be speaking and yelling at the same time. Such incidents were witnessed mostly when the participants were not so knowledgeable, were inexperienced or were feeling highly tense, specially when cornered or when lacking credible evidence.

Yet, I still admit that there have and will always be pros and cons to such programmes. All channels seem determined to continue on this path of debate in order to win more audiences. But it will be less useful and more harmful when such programmes are allowed to get out of the control, when the host is unable to direct the exchange, and more importantly when the show hosts inexperienced people as participants. Some of those inexperienced discussants have now become professionals in television entertainment, and since such appearances are financially rewarding, they are determined to appear on as many channels as they can.

My criticism is directed more towards those professionals than the channels themselves, specially when they ignore ethics, miss-quote or even ignore simple and well-known facts. They simply try to intimidate and misuse the chance given to them to appear on the screen.

I would like to refer to one particular case of personal concern related to a programme televised by ORBIT Satellite Television when Imad El Deen Adeb hosted Dr. Shafiq El Ghabra, professor of political science at Kuwait University. It seemed that when Dr. Ghabra was cornered by the host to support his statements by providing names of sources and evidence, he simply alleged that I, as a former Iraqi minister of oil, had confided in him during the only brief encounter I had with him in Amman in January 1996, that (I was forced by the Iraqi government in 1990 to forge some maps in order to show that Kuwait was stealing oil from within the Iraqi borders).

Such a claim or quotation has never been made by me whether to Dr. Ghabra or for that matter, to any one else. It was a deliberate and cheap attempt by Dr. Ghabra to support his views or analysis of the conflict that led to the eventual tragedy not only for Kuwait and Iraq, but also for the whole Arab Nation. I have never made such a claim whether through any of my public appearances in so many parts of the world or even in private meetings and gatherings.

Obviously I wrote to ORBIT requesting a suitable time and space to air my rejection and denial of such an allegation and reserving my right to follow other paths, if I deem necessary. But I do hope that, out of the above incident and many other similar incidents, the satellite channels will review their programmes and revise their lists of participants for the sake of credibility and to avoid any embarrassment and to ensure the airing of appropriate and credible programmes.

Issam A. R. Al Chalabi,  
 Former Minister of Oil of Iraq  
 (March 1987-1990)



## What the Arab World's 'grand scale' failures have meant in human terms

The Dream Palace of the Arabs:  
A Generation's Odyssey  
By Fouad Ajami  
Pantheon. 344 pp. \$26

Reviewed by  
Robert Irwin

IN THE Seven Pillars of Wisdom (1935), T.E. Lawrence wrote that he "meant to make a new nation, to restore lost influence, to give twenty millions of Semites the foundations on which to build an inspired dream palace of their national thoughts." Lawrence's account of the Arab Revolt in World War I and of his own part in it told a story of spectacular victories against the Turks and exciting feats of individual heroism, yet the book was in the end an account of hopes betrayed and promises broken.

Fouad Ajami's account of political and cultural developments in the Near East since World War II is similarly melancholy, a kind of unsystematic group biography of disappointed Arab intellectuals. Ajami himself was born in southern Lebanon (a predominantly Shiite region) in 1945. The leading figures in The Dream Palace of the Arabs belong to an older and once more hopeful generation. They include Naguib Mahfouz (b. 1911), the Nobel Prize-winning Egyptian novelist; Khalil Hawi (1919-82), a Lebanese poet and academic; Louis Awad (1915-90), a Coptic Christian academic and journalist; Nizar Qabbani (b. 1923), a Lebanese poet; Adonis (b. 1930), a Syro-Lebanese poet; Abdel Rahman Munif (b. 1933), a novelist whose works have caused him to be exiled from his native Saudi Arabia; and Sadiq Jalal al-Azm (b. 1937), a Syrian Marxist intellectual.

Some in this generation of secularly minded intellectuals had been inspired by a classic of political-historical polemic, The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab Nationalist Movement, published in 1938 by George Antonius. In that book, Antonius chronicled the collapse of Turkish power in the Near East and implicitly looked forward to the complete emancipation of the Arab World. Although Antonius was a Christian Arab born in Lebanon and educated in Egypt, he gave preeminent place in his book to the Palestinian Arab struggle against Zionism. According to the concluding lines of The Arab Awakening, "the logic of facts is inexorable. It shows that no room can be made in Palestine for a second nation except by dislodging or exterminating the nation in possession." It seems from the immediately preceding paragraphs

that their author assumed that it would be the Jews who would be dislodged or exterminated. Antonius, who died in 1942, did not live to see his expectations confounded by the defeat of a coalition of Arab armies and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

Nevertheless, despite the catastrophe of 1948, Arab politicians and thinkers continued to nourish great expectations throughout the 1950s and most of the 1960s. The withdrawal of Britain and France from a colonial role in the Middle East and North Africa encouraged optimism. After Col. Gamal Abdul Nasser's triumph over Britain, France and Israel during the Suez crisis of 1956, he became a focus of hope not just for Egyptians but for most Arabs. The politically engaged adopted Pan-Arabism and socialism. Above all, expectations were fuelled by the rhetoric of politicians, pressmen and poets, rhetoric that promised that Israel's days were numbered. If there is a fault in Ajami's book, it is that he is too kind to poets, such as Qabbani, who by manufacturing slogans of uncompro-

feuding militias led by unprincipled warlords. Algeria's ruling regime corruptly wasted its oil and mineral resources - and the princes of the Arabian Peninsula did likewise. Iraq launched bloody expensive and ultimately unsuccessful attacks against Iran and then Kuwait. The Palestinian leadership in exile, after a more or less unbroken record of strategic miscalculations, finally signed an agreement with Israel that gave them very little indeed.

The young, having despaired of Nasserism, pan-Arabism and Palestinian activism, as well as of their ineffective and unbelieving parents, began to turn to Islam for the answers to clearly perceived political and economic problems. For Ajami this is no answer, but merely another problem - a disaster even. (His account of the persecution of Egyptian secularists and Coptic Christians by Islamic fundamentalists is particularly harrowing.) The Dream Palace of the Arabs is not just a lament for what has failed to come to pass; it is also a lament for what has been lost - the old, confessionally and ethnically tolerant, polyglot, Levantine ambience, the ascendancy of enlightened liberal elites, and the open-minded engagement with Western culture. Louis Awad used to maintain that he was really a European who had been stolen away by gypsies. Others, admittedly, were more ambivalent. Adonis argued against stealing modernity from the West but added that "when we reject its machines and technology, this should not mean that we reject the intellectual processes that produced these machines. It should mean only that we oppose the way this technology is dumped on us, the way it turns us into mere consumers, the way it turns our country into a large flea-market."

According to Ajami, "it has been the besetting sin - and poverty - of a good deal of writing on the Arab World that it is done by many who have no mastery of Arabic." His book, on the other hand, is very much an insider's book, a group portrait written by one who has known most of those in the picture. The Dream Palace of the Arabs is an absorbing and sadly moving account of what political, economic and social failures on a grand scale have meant in human terms and at an individual level.

The writer is the author of several books on the Middle East as well as of several novels. His most recent book is "Islamic Art in Context." This article is reprinted from The Washington Post.

### THE DREAM PALACE OF THE ARABS A Generation's Odyssey



FOUAD AJAMI

### Greek and Turkish Cypriots must sign accord before EU membership — Denktash

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash said Saturday the Greek Cypriots must sign an accord with his break-away state before the island joins the European Union (EU), the Anatolia news agency reported.

"An accord is indispensable between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the Greek Cypriots on membership of the European Union [and] that could take

a long time," the agency quoted Mr. Denktash as saying in Istanbul.

The TRNC was set up by the Turkish Cypriots in 1983, but it is recognised only by Ankara.

The internationally-recognised Greek Cypriot government of Cyprus is due to start accession talks with the EU later this month and despite invitations to participate in the process, the Turkish Cypriots have refused.

"Let's build bridges between us and first of all resolve certain questions between us, so that in the future, negotiations can take place," Mr. Denktash added, without providing more details.

Mr. Denktash was speaking at a meeting organised by the University of Istanbul.

The Turkish-Cypriot leader said Monday the TRNC would unite with Turkey if the EU grants

membership to Cyprus.

Turkey and Mr. Denktash are staunchly opposed to Cyprus's admission into the EU before a political solution is reached to end the island's 24-year division or before Ankara itself joins the bloc.

Cyprus has been divided since Turkish troops occupied the north in 1974 in response to a coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the island with Greece.

### Regent calls for bridging gap between scientific community, rest of public

(Continued from page 1)

legislation with scientific methodology and to help the educated people of Jordan to remain committed to this modern methodology. He added that legislation

is behind any great project in a modern state.

Prince Hassan expressed hope that such a visit has shed light on the various sectors and resources; human, economic and natural.

He said: "We have to integrate these three dimensions together as soon as possible."

Referring to the RSS, Prince Hassan said that it serves as a backup for academic institutions and

universities enabling them to achieve their objectives in serving the Jordanian community.

He said the RSS maintains good cooperation with Arab and foreign scientific research institutions.

### Arafat attacks Israel for 'aggression' amid continued unrest in West Bank

(Continued from page 1)

including holding an illegal demonstration, disturbing public order, endangering public security and ignoring army orders.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said in a statement released on Saturday that unrest would continue until Israel put an end to the soldiers involved in the shooting deaths.

"The state of popular outrage will not stop without sending the killers to court

and declaring the results of the [Israeli army] investigation in public," the statement said.

The Israeli army says the soldiers responsible for Tuesday's killings believed they were under attack when a vehicle driven by the workers swerved towards troops at the road-block.

Israel has since accepted that there was no violent intent and opened a probe into the killings.

Meanwhile, the Islamic

Resistance Movement (Hamas) called on the PNA on Saturday to stop using its self-rule forces to stop clashes which have raged in the West Bank for five days.

"We are greatly sorrowed by the authority's position, sending policemen to block our angry people from the criminal enemy," the Hamas said in a statement received by AFP.

"All free men among our people are pained to see Palestinian police forces

work to protect the occupiers from our people's anger and our stones," the statement said, asking the PNA to "reevaluate" its stance.

Palestinian police worked on Friday and Saturday to prevent stone-throwing youths from clashing with Israeli soldiers in demonstrations which have raged for five days after the killing of three Arab workers by Israeli soldiers on Tuesday.

### Tehran denounces U.S. ruling in terrorism suit as 'baseless'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Friday said a U.S. judge's ruling that Tehran should pay millions of dollars in damages for the death of an American in a 1995 terrorist attack in Gaza is "baseless and irresponsible."

The official Iranian news agency IRNA said that the "summary judgement by a U.S. district court against the Islamic Republic of Iran

is baseless and irresponsible in the extreme and representative of a dangerous trend and should be condemned."

Quoting a statement from the Iranian delegation to the United Nations, the agency added: "The allegations raised in the hurried proceedings of the court are without a shred of substantiation, have no basis in

fact, and fail any standard of evidence."

A U.S. judge on Wednesday ordered Iran to pay nearly \$250 million in damages to the family of Alisa Flatow, a 20-year-old student who was killed in an April 1995 terrorist attack on a tourist bus in Gaza.

In his ruling, the judge found Iran guilty of giving financial support to the

Shaqqi faction of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a group blamed for the attack.

Flatow's parents sued Iran for causing their daughter's death under legislation signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996 giving Americans the power to sue in U.S. courts over terrorist acts perpetrated in foreign countries.

### Sharon spells out Lebanon pullout plan

(Continued from page 1)

withdraw Israeli troops from Lebanon if an agreement can be reached with Beirut for the Lebanese army to deploy in the south and disarm Hizbollah guerrillas.

The Lebanese government and Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, have rejected this, saying Israel must withdraw unconditionally.

Israel set up a 15-kilometre wide occupation zone in south Lebanon in 1985 to protect its northern border. Around 1,000 Israeli troops patrol the zone, which has come under frequent attacks from Hizbollah.

A sharp rise in the army's death toll, which reached 39 last year, has fuelled a campaign in Israel to bring

the soldiers home.

Meanwhile, Syrian President Hafez Al Assad held talks here on Saturday with Lebanese leaders on future peace moves, both having rejected the conditions on which Israel has offered to withdraw from south Lebanon.

Presidential spokesman Joubran Kouireh said the meeting was attended by Lebanese President Elias Hrawi, Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Foreign Minister Faris Bouez.

Present on the Syrian side were Vice-President Abdul-Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Farouq Al Shara.

Officials said Mr. Assad and Mr. Hrawi were expected to renew their rejection

of the Israeli offer and to reiterate their rejection of any attempt to separate the Lebanese and Syrian tracks at the peace talks with Israel which opened in 1991.

Officials said the two leaders would also review issues to be discussed with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook during his visits to Lebanon and Syria on Wednesday as part of a Middle East tour.

Mr. Cook, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union (EU), will present a fresh EU initiative aimed at reviving the stalled Arab-Israeli peace talks. He will also visit Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian self-ruled areas and Egypt.

Mr. Hrawi's visit also precedes U.N. Secretary Gen-

eral Kofi Annan's tour of the Middle East, during which he will meet the Syrian and Lebanese leaders to review developments in Arab-Israeli relations and activities of U.N. peace-keeping forces in the Golan Heights and south Lebanon.

Syria, the main foreign power broker in Lebanon where it has some 35,000 troops, and Lebanon itself have held sporadic peace talks with Israel since 1991 but no tangible progress has been made.

Syria, whose peace talks with Israel broke off in early 1996, has condemned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for refusing to withdraw fully from the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel in 1967.

(Continued from page 1)

the endorsement Friday of the 15-nation committee for a plan under which the Iraqi government would hand out vouchers to the pilgrims for travel, lodging and other services.

An equivalent sum would be transferred from a U.N. "oil-for-food" escrow account to a Jordanian Bank with a branch in Saudi Arabia, to cover the cash value of the vouchers.

Iraqi U.N. diplomats have so far rejected any plan that bypasses the Iraqi central bank.

Mr. Monteiro said he had consulted not only Jordanian and Saudi Arabian diplomats but also Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf, who has been in New York this week. He had also enlisted the support of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. There is also little time to spare. Although the pil-

grimage, or Haj, takes place in early April, Mr. Monteiro said Saudi Arabia had set March 23 as the final date for issuing visas for pilgrims.

The U.S. State Department also said Friday it presented to the United Nations the names of two U.S. diplomats to be included in the special group in charge of inspecting so-called presidential sites in Iraq.

The officials are Ryan Crocker, who was U.S. ambassador to Kuwait from May 1994 to December 1997 and David Newton, who served as ambassador to Yemen from November 1994 to December 1997.

Both diplomats are Middle East specialists and have served in Iraq. Mr. Crocker was there from 1978 to 1980 and Mr. Newton was ambassador to Baghdad from 1984 to 1988.

The head of the U.N. spe-

cial group for inspecting Iraq's presidential sites, Jayantha Dhanapala, left Baghdad Saturday after a four-day mission to organise inspection procedures, a U.N. statement said.

Mr. Dhanapala "prepared the framework for the special group to visit the presidential sites," said a statement by the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) for disarming Iraq.

"Dhanapala is satisfied with the discussions, and the assurances from the Iraqi authorities of their decision to implement... in letter and spirit" the accord signed between Baghdad and the United Nations Feb. 23 granting full access to the eight sites, the statement said.

Mr. Dhanapala, a Sri Lankan, will return to Iraq on March 22 at the head of the special group, made up of diplomats and disarmament experts charged under

the accord with inspecting Iraq's presidential sites, the statement added.

Two teams of United Nations arms experts specialising in chemical and ballistic weapons arrived in Iraq on Saturday for a week-long mission, the official Iraqi news agency INA reported.

The ballistic weapons team comprises 26 inspectors and is due to wind up its mission on March 22, while the chemical team is made up of 10 experts who are to finish their work by March 20, said INA.

The agency was quoting General Hussam Mohammad Amin who heads the National Surveillance Department, the Iraqi body charged with liaising with the UNSCOM on Iraqi disarmament.



## Saudi: Specifications accord with Israel will help remove barriers

AMMAN (J.T.) — Specifications and Metrology Institute Director General Hassan Saudi Saturday said the agreement recently signed with Israel will help remove all non-customs barriers impeding Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli trade.

In a statement to the press, Mr. Saudi said the agreement provides for mutual recognition of the reports issued by both Jordanian and Israeli specification and metrology institutions, in addition to the reports of the Royal Scientific Society (RSS).

He noted that several Jordanian products exported to Israel are subject to examination by the Israeli specifications and metrology institute.

Mr. Saudi pointed out that

the two specification institutions have initially agreed to recognize reports issued by them in respect of 12 items. These items are: Portland and white cement, wall-to-wall carpet, television sets, steel bars used for construction, air conditioning units, ceramic and concrete tiles, air and oil filters for cars, soya oil, paints, batteries and fertilisers.

However, he added, once the two sides fully adhere to the provisions of the agreement, the list can be expanded to include more items.

Mr. Saudi said a technical Israeli delegation will visit the RSS laboratories to make sure that they meet the technical requirements for awarding certificates of conformity.

## Ministry of Finance to begin paying cash subsidies next week

AMMAN (Petra) — Starting March 24, the Ministry of Finance will start paying cash subsidy for sugar, rice and milk, on behalf of the Ministry of Supply.

Finance Minister Suleiman Hafez said this arrangement has been made in coordination with the Ministry of Supply. Mr. Hafez said the payment will cover the months of January, February, March and April.

He indicated that the cash subsidy will be paid over a period of one month starting

March 24. He said that bread cash subsidy will also be paid through the postal saving offices and the various banks entrusted by the ministry to carry out such a task.

Mr. Hafez said beneficiaries, other than civil servants and retirees, can collect the cash subsidy from the banks and post offices, where they used to collect their cash subsidy before. Civil servants, retirees and beneficiaries from the National Aid Fund, will receive the cash payments with their monthly salary for April.



Abu Shakra Introduces New Perfume

Abu Shakra Trading Company last week introduced a new perfume to the Jordanian market. At a reception held at Marriott Hotel, Chairman of the Board of Abu Shakra Trading Company Abdul Hamid Abu Shakra, and Messrs Ra'ed and Rami Abu Shakra introduced the women's perfume, Very Valentino from Elisabeth Arden, in the presence of Arden's Marketing Manager Mike Durant, who said that Jordan is the first country in the Middle East where this perfume has been introduced.

## Palestinian trade hit by border closures — UNCTAD

GENEVA (R) — Despite hopes to the contrary, the Palestinian economy has not emerged from its reliance on trade with Israel and remains hamstrung by border closures and limits on movement of goods, a U.N. study said on Thursday.

Dependence on Israel leaves the Palestinian economy acutely vulnerable to bilateral political ties, and the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said its business activity, income and investments had all been falling since 1996.

Israeli closures of the border with the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the last two years have hit Palestinian agricultural export especially hard, according to the annual study "Palestinian merchandise trade in the 1990s."

"The highly visible nature of the border closures and their impact in 1996 and 1997 have eroded earlier optimism and confidence in the Palestinian territory as potentially attractive for domestic and foreign

investment and trade," it said.

"Without sustained lessening of these barriers, the prospects for reinvigorating Palestinian external trade and pursuing an export-led growth strategy seem distant."

The report added that structural reform was also needed to make better use of the Palestinian territory's production capacity and help it to engage in global commerce.

To be competitive, Palestinian industry had to move from relying on low costs to attracting investment for more lucrative niche products for export.

Palestinian exports of merchandise goods exports fell to an estimated \$265 million in 1996 from \$326 million in 1995. Exports to Israel fell to \$235 million from \$306 million.

A customs union with Israel established following an economic protocol in 1994 did not produce an anticipated move into new markets, and UNCTAD said Israel remained virtually the sole trade partner.

"Although the accords allow the Palestinian authority a significant degree of economic decision-making and pursuit of distinct economic and trade interests, trade performance has become subordinated to a volatile security situation and attendant measures, especially border closures and restrictions on movement of goods since 1996," it added.

It said sectors with high export growth potential included footwear, ready-to-wear garments, pharmaceuticals, metalworking, plastic, food processing and agro-industries.

Ready-to-wear garments are the largest industrial branch in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and also the largest single component of Palestinian exports to Israel.

But UNCTAD quoted experts as saying that while the sector had great export potential, it was plagued by "weak and wasteful management of material, space and quality control and a generalised lack of good manufacturing practices."

## Lebanon central bank encouraged by reduction in budget deficit

BEIRUT (R) — The Lebanese government's budget deficit reduction in the first two months of 1998 is encouraging and could lead to lower interest rates, Nasser Saidi, first vice governor of the central bank, said Saturday.

"We are now on the road to what was required and that is a reduction in the deficit. We are seeing that efforts to contain expenditure and increase the collection of revenues is showing excellent results. The markets will view it very favourably," Mr. Saidi told Reuters.

"We have always felt that a reduction of the budget deficit will encourage a downward trend in interest rates. This would suggest that perhaps after first quarter results we would see some reduction in interest rates," he added.

The finance ministry said Friday the government had cut its budget deficit in the first two months of 1998 to 27 per cent, down sharply from 53 per cent in the same period a year earlier.

A surplus of expenditure against revenue of eight per cent was registered in February after a 45 per cent deficit in January, it said. The target for the entire year of 1998 is a 42 per cent deficit.

The surplus in February, moving the budget for the first two months of the year well inside the 1998 target, was welcome news to the government of Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri which has vowed to impose fiscal discipline.

Mr. Saidi said that according to figures obtained by the central bank, inflation had fallen to between five per cent and 5.5 per cent in the first two months of 1998, compared with 7.2 per cent in January of 1997 and 11.1 per cent in February of that year.

He said a healthier inflation picture could also bring a fall in interest rates following a review of the government's finances after the first quarter.

Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh said in remarks published Saturday that there were no

plans to raise interest rates on treasury bills.

The latest budget deficit figures are likely to bring some psychological relief to the government which has come under mounting pressure to control its finances.

International rating agencies had warned of a possible downgrade unless the deficit was tamed and the government had vowed not to allow any spending beyond the projected 1998 deficit.

Investors on a lethargic Beirut Stock Exchange have been waiting for the government to deliver on its promise to impose fiscal discipline, brokers said.

Lebanon last week said Paribas would market a \$500 million three-year Eurobond, the start of a \$2 billion borrowing programme on international markets.

Mr. Saidi said the lower budget deficit figures would make Lebanon more attractive in international financial markets.

## Japan heads for first recession in 23 years

TOKYO (R) — Japan appears headed for its first recession in over two decades judging by data released Friday, a prospect that is likely to strengthen calls for the government to take decisive steps to jumpstart the economy.

Japan's economy shrank 0.2 per cent in the October-December quarter from the previous quarter, prompting the government to admit that its growth target of 0.1 per cent for the fiscal year ending on March 31 would be hard to achieve.

"When looking at the October-December data, it seems quite difficult to achieve around 0.1 per cent growth this fiscal year," said Economic Planning Agency (EPA) Vice Minister Shimpei Nukaya.

Although Mr. Nukaya said the economy was unlikely to worsen further, private economists said it was sure to show minus growth for fiscal 1997/98.

Yasuhiko Ushikubo, an economist at the Industrial Bank of Japan (IBJ), said: "It will be impossible to achieve the government's growth target of 0.1 per cent for the fiscal year. A contraction of 0.4 or 0.5 per cent will be more likely."

If Japan does slip into recession in 1997/98 it will be the first time since the economy contracted 0.7 per cent in fiscal 1974/75.

Economists said the outlook remained bleak, citing an absence of any bright signs.

Mr. Nukaya said consumption was likely to recover slightly, but economists disagreed.

Matthew Poggi, an economist with Lehman Brothers, said: "In terms of a rebound, I have to disagree a bit with the head of the EPA. So far, I haven't really seen a rebound in consumption in the first quarter. We've had household spending and retail sales numbers and they really don't look much better than the first quarter of last year."

In January, the percentage of disposable income that was actually used for spending at wage-earning households fell to a record low.

Economists also said the fallout from turmoil in Asian economies was likely to take its toll in the coming months.

## HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) Handle business this morning. This evening, you're going to want to relax at home. A nice meal, good music and perhaps a soak in the hot tub will make this a memorable Friday night. If your sweetheart has other plans, let him or her go without you. An occasional absence does make the heart grow fonder.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) You're able to learn more quickly than usual. Information just sticks to your brain. So study something your boss or professor has been trying to teach you. A loved one can help. He or she may not have complete mastery of the subject yet, but the insights will be priceless.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) It's a good afternoon to go shopping, if you can find the energy. It looks like you'd rather just take off early on your weekend jaunt. That could prove more expensive than you'd planned. Better check on your motel reservations and other little details.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) It looks like you could pull off the deal of the century if you got insider information and tried something unusual. You might be able to wrangle an unconventional loan. If you don't have somebody helping you with a real estate deal, start investigating one. He or she will most likely be a Libra.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) Your luck changes for the worse as your day progresses. There's a whole lot to do. Scan over your lists first thing this morning. Sort out those little pieces of paper in your pockets, too. A couple hours spent getting organised this morning could really save your bacon later in the day.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Conditions are hectic this morning, but you'll get the most creative work done then. Meet with friends later in the day. A party would be a good way to relax and renew your energy. In fact, it's a good weekend to party, from tonight clear through Sunday.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) This is easy, but don't get lazy. You're going to have to perform up to the standards you've already set for yourself. Better check your calendar again. If you miss this meeting, you'll be in trouble. It looks like there might be quite a bit of money involved.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) Conditions for travel look excellent through Sunday. How long has it been since you and your sweetheart had a romantic cruise? If you can't afford the Princess line, a sailboat will do. If you can't even manage a rowboat, don't let that stop you. There's some sort of cruising you can do this weekend.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You and your partner had better have a meeting this morning. You're going to have to shell out some money later in the day, so you need to agree on priorities. If either of you spends the money without the other's approval, it could make the mutual purchase impossible.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) If you push yourself hard this morning, you might get out early. It'll definitely be worth the effort. You work harder than three or four people most of the time, so why not allow yourself to relax harder than three or four people as well? Go for it.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) You'd like to speed the whole day in fascinating conversation. Instead, you're going to have to take care of business. Consider the possibilities and make the best decision. It won't be easy, but it could bring you fame as well as fortune.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) This weekend you'll be even more romantic than usual. If you don't have a sweetheart, consider somebody you've always thought of as a good friend. There might be a difference in your ages, but that's OK. It's the level of communication that counts.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

## THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Part of CEO
- Gather together
- Spherical bodies
- Helper
- Segments
- Arguable
- Dogmatize
- Decimal base
- Are
- Business representative
- Small bills
- Director Kazan
- Summer TV fare, often
- Former Russian ruler
- Winged mammal
- Exhilarate
- Large truck, briefly
- Fast horse
- Squal
- Hubbub
- TV PI Peter
- Andretti or Lemieux
- Pen on the turn
- Secured
- Set, as clay
- Young woman
- Ex-G.I.s
- The Maltese Falcon co-star
- Nile port
- Industrious insect
- Dorogozitsa
- Go off, as milk
- Indescent gems
- On one's right mind
- Nudnik
- Written test
- Pop quiz

DOWN

- Bridge position
- Mature Arabian gull
- Peaks, a.g.
- Summits
- Dresses reaching below the ankles
- Curving courses
- Respected leader
- Machete
- Last Greek letter
- Took a horse
- Given title
- RBI or ERA
- Condo for canines
- Musical of the 60s
- Income opposite
- Secular
- Takes five
- "Milkdemon" author
- Quaid or Travis
- Minuscule
- Get on
- Eagle's nest
- Test the fit of
- Yamulkes
- Snails
- Stravinsky or Sikorsky
- TNT
- Famed trumpet player Al
- Misbehaved warrior
- Pumpkin kin
- Luxurious country house
- Guild: abbr.
- Brogue or wingtip, a.g.
- Juniper
- For pity's sake
- Mythical Greek
- Nickname for country house
- Those people
- Tiler's tool
- Exploit

## Peanuts



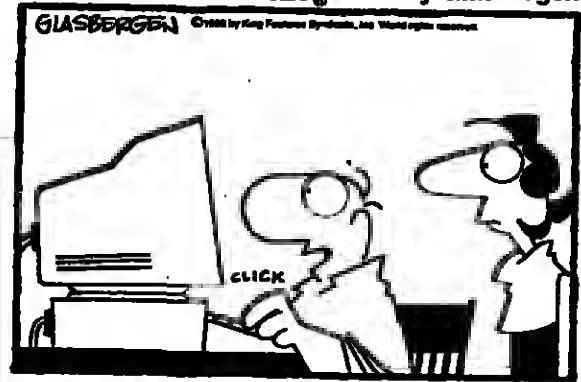
## Andy Capp



## Mutt'n'Jeff



## THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I'm setting up a Web page so other couples can vote on our disagreements."

## JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

Qualified employees are essential.

WHY THE COMPANY'S PRESIDENT WENT BACK TO SCHOOL.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answers Monday

Yesterday's Jumbles: GUESS ESSAY RADISH PLURAL Answer: How the hot dog vendor tackled his job — WITH TELLISH



## Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

### Treasury collects around JD10 million a year from processing domestic help applications

AMMAN (Petra) — The Saudi ambassador to Jordan, Abdullah Sudeiri, said he will facilitate the travel of Jordanian businessmen to Saudi Arabia to hold talks with their Saudi counterparts. Mr. Sudeiri was speaking during a meeting with the president and members of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce, held at the federation's headquarters.

Mr. Sudeiri expressed readiness to help the Jordanian side overcome any obstacles impeding the importation and exportation of goods between both countries.

The Saudi ambassador and the federation executive board members reviewed the outcome of the visit early this year by a Jordanian industrial and commercial delegation to Saudi Arabia, and means of enhancing economic relations.

Mr. Sudeiri outlined the important role that the private sector in both countries can play in increasing scopes of operation in the various fields, particularly in such areas as joint projects and investments.

The federation president, Haidar Murad, presented the federation's trophy to Mr. Sudeiri in appreciation of his efforts to enhance economic trade between both countries.

TEL AVIV — Kitan Consolidated Ltd., the Tel Aviv-based textiles and clothing manufacturer decided to move most of its sewing operations to Jordan in an attempt to recover from a loss of NIS 36.1 million in 1997.

The company attributed its losses to a drop in local sales, restructuring costs, which totalled NIS 69.6 million, and the difficulties of Gior-Sabrina, put under receivership last December. Kitan owns 50.3 per cent of Gior.

Kitan may continue to fire workers under cutbacks this year, "but the large-scale layoffs have more or less been completed with the closure of big departments," company financial director Yehiel Yeshua said.

During 1998, Kitan said it would take further efficiency measures in production lines for Kitan and subsidiary Tango.

Last year Kitan fired 400 workers in its Nazareth plant and moved most production to Dimona.

This year it plans to unite the operations of its subsidiary Tango, now operating in Yarka, Nazareth and Beit She'an into one factory expected to be based in Yarka.

Tango, which produces Levi's and T-shirts, may also establish a joint venture in Jordan, Mr. Yashua said. At present Kitan has no plans to open a factory in Jordan, as the work in the country is subcontracted to large sewing houses.

The company said it is aiming to produce higher quality products that have a higher added value, due to competition in the labour-intensive industry. Kitan sells mostly to the local market.

This year, the Golf-Kitan is to sell Benetton clothing, after winning an exclusive contract for the franchise in Israel.

## Sudeiri ready to help Jordanian businessmen deal with Saudis

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## Israel's Kitan to move more work to Irbid

From the Jerusalem Post

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## 35 Years of Excellence in Quality Service

Hotel InterContinental Jordan celebrates its 35th anniversary today. With its fourth major expansion and renovation programme under way, the hotel continues to revive its fresh image and maintain its high standards of quality, hospitality, reliability and first-class service.

Today Jordan's leading hotel is turning into an impressive 500-room building. With an exquisite and newly built health spa, an outdoor swimming pool, extravagant ballrooms, meeting rooms, Middle Eastern and international restaurants and cafes and other facilities, the hotel is well prepared to serve its foreign and Jordanian guests to international five-star standards.

The hotel's InterFit Health Spa, which started operation in November 1997, offers the latest state-of-the-art gym equipment, fitness classes and an indoor lap pool all aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the spa's members and guests, helping them look and feel good. In House guests and InterFit members can also enjoy therapeutic massages, soothing facials and body treatments in the sanctuary of peace and tranquility.

When the hotel opened its doors in 1963, as Jordan's first five-star hotel, it had 110 guest rooms. By the end of the present renovations, scheduled for completion by the end of this year, the hotel will stand as an outstanding 500-room building with a new look, new restaurants, new shopping arcade, new underground parking facilities and new and renovated guest rooms.

## Telefonica and WorldCom announce joint venture

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Spain's Telefonica and U.S. telecom giant WorldCom and MCI have announced plans to cooperate on several strategic business ventures, in a bid to strengthen their positions in Europe and the Americas.

WorldCom President Bernard Ebbers said in a statement that the cooperation would "enhance the short- and long-term growth and value of the companies, given the rapidly expanding global market opportunities."

Telefonica Chairman Juan Villalonga also said the deal would enhance opportunities for his company.

"We have chosen the best partners to help broaden our reach in Europe, consolidate our market leadership in the Spanish-speaking world and move forward with new investment opportunities in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, which will be our principle focus during 1998," Mr. Villalonga said.

The agreement builds upon an agreement last April between Telefonica and MCI which gives the Spanish company a minority equity position in WorldCom's current and future European businesses.

## REUTERS REUTERS

### The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 14/03/98 19:13									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	YEN	FRF	ITL	ESP	JPY
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8160	0.6936	1.4736	127.30	1.4118	1790.00	2.0478	6.0970
DE Mark	0.5510	1.0000	0.3298	0.8177	70.40	0.7776	986.95	1.1281	3.3691
GB Sterling	1.5705	3.0380	1.0000	2.4603	213.46	2.3584	2990.20	3.4205	10.1850
CH Franc	0.6787	1.2813	0.4060	1.0000	86.71	0.9678	1214.38	1.3830	4.1364
JP Yen	0.0078	1.4196	0.4681	1.1625	1.00	1.1043	14.00	160.18	4.7689
CA Dollar	0.7083	1.2903	0.4301	1.0486	1.10	1.2685	1.4643	4.3281	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0134	0.3341	0.8823	1402.72	0.7883	11.43	3.4042	
NL Guilder	0.4884	0.9422	0.3222	0.7136	62.37	0.6883	873.98	2.5768	
FR Franc	0.1640	0.2976	0.0981	0.2419	20.94	0.2310	33.57	33.5700	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	YEN	FRF	ITL	ESP	JPY
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8160	0.6936	1.4736	127.30	1.4118	1790.00	2.0478	6.0970
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	2.6200	0.9377	2.1364	170.40	1.5804	1956.15	2.6186	7.8106
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.4990	0.1666	0.4166	33.71	0.3371	416.66	0.4990	1.4990
Bahraini Dinar	2.66	4.9900	1.6666	4.1666	337.10	2.6666	3333.33	4.9900	14.9900
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.5147	0.1731	0.4328	35.11	0.3511	432.80	0.5147	1.5439
Kuwait Dinar	3.2702	6.1242	2.0734	5.1825	413.44	3.2702	4034.00	6.1242	18.3720
UAE Dirham	0.2723	0.5090	0.1712	0.4256	34.08	0.3408	425.60	0.5090	1.5270
Lebanese Lira	0.05	0.0940	0.0317	0.0787	6.37	0.0637	78.70	0.0940	0.2820
Egyptian	0.2328	0.4376	0.1476	0.3690	29.84	0.2984	369.00	0.4376	1.3128

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	YEN	FRF	ITL	ESP	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4990	0.1666	0.4166	33.71	0.3371	416.66	0.4990	1.4990
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.5090	0.1712	0.4256	34.08	0.3408	425.60	0.5090	1.5270
KW Dinar	3.2702	6.1242	2.0734	5.1825	413.44	3.2702	4034.00	6.1242	18.3720
BH Dinar	0.2723	0.5090	0.1712	0.4256	34.08	0.3408	425.60	0.5090	1.5270
CY Pound	1.8810	3.5448	1.126	2.7724	220.456	1.8810	2322.00	3.5448	10.6368

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months	18 Months	24 Months	36 Months	48 Months
USD	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58	5.58
GBP	7.26	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40	7.40
JPY	0.51	0.56	0.62	0.67	0.73				
DEM	3.40	3.42	3.43	3.43	3.43				
FRF	3.01	3.02	3.02	3.02	3.02				
CHF	1.12	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10				
ITL	5.58	5.57	5.10	4.83	4.54				

Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Change	High	Low	Open	Close	High	Low	Open
New York	DOW JONES	8602.52	-57.04	-0.66	8598.42	8602.52	8598.42	8602.52	8598.42
New York	S&P 500	1068.91	-1.31	-0.12	1067.96	1068.91	1067.96	1068.91	1067.96
London	FTSE 100	5782.3	-12.5	-0.22	5794.12	5782.3	5794.12	5782.3	5794.12
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	17080.14	-484.92	-2.83	17129	17080.14	17129	17080.14	17129
Paris	CAC 40	3540.23	-13.68	-0.39	3553.93	3540.23	3553.93	3540.23	3553.93
Frankfurt	DAX	4893.65	-50.05	-1.03	4943.70	4893.65	4943.70	4893.65	4943.70

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months	18 Months	24 Months	36 Months	48 Months
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.1818	1.1877							
DE Mark	0.3897	0.3916							
CH Franc	0.4788	0.4822							
FR Franc	0.1161	0.1167							
JP Yen	0.0632	0.0636							
NL Guilder	0.3485	0.347							
IT Lira	0.3949	0.3969							

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - (SHELBI)											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 14/03/1998											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE			
346,000	250,000	ARAB BANK	15.6	1.18	11	320	109000	339.50	340.00	+50+	
2,340	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	14	58868	102468	1.77	1.74	-03-	
3,540	1,230	BANK OF JORDAN	4.2	0.00	1	30	67	1.34	1.34	-	
2,580	1,680	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.5	5.97	38	19837	34248	1.73	1.75	+02+	
5,300	4,610	JOR. TRADING BANK	10.3	3.75	10	59924	299167	4.98	4.95	-03-	
4,180	1,820	JOR. INVEST BANK	10.1	0.00	1	1000	1980	1.90	1.90	-	
4,020	1,820	JOR. GULF BANK	4.0	10.29	4	2000	1360	6.69	6.68	-01-	
2,350	1,690	JOR. TRADING BANK	10.3	4.75	12	5200	12259	2.03	2.02	-01-	
1,460	800	JOR. INV. F.M. BANK/NEW	0.00	0.00	1	2000	3470	1.72	1.71	-01-	
1,460	800	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITRA)	6	15.79	1	100	95	0.96	0.95	-01-	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 235.95 %CHG: -0.03 93 149999 564254											
2,400	1,590	JOR. PREMIER BANK	8.0	31.63	4	13000	27950	2.26	2.25	+11-	
2,350	1,590	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.8	4.43	1	2000	4100	2.05	2.05	-	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 122.40 %CHG: -0.53 5 15000 32050											
2,140	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.9	4.85	15	4661	9599	2.06	2.06	-	
5,080	2,450	KISHI MINERALS	58.3	0.00	1	2000	10660	5.08	5.33	+25+	
1,550	930	KATL. PORTFOLIO	0.00	0.00	8	4050	4111	1.14	1.12	-03-	
1,120	850	REAL ESTATE INV.	14.0	5.94	1	100	101	1.06	1.01	-05-	
9,350	6,700	ALRAI	9.5	6.44	8	5300	49178	9.25	9.31	+06+	
1,090	900	ZAKRA EDUCATION	0.00	0.00	3	750	720	0.96	0.96	-	
1,450	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	7.3	6.71	2	200	328	1.73	1.64	-09-	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 120.87 %CHG: -0.38 40 17119 75584											
1,160	930	ATTANOR	9	0.00	6	13150	14650	1.16	1.16	-	
4,450	2,690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.3	3.65	11	3998	11597	2.95	2.86	-09-	
1,140	3,050	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	9.2	3.02	12	67	8661	3.35	3.32	-03-	
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	10.3	8.25	13	827	8607	10.70	10.70	-05-	
1,390	1,400	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	10.7	8.13	2	200	246	1.29	1.23	-06-	
7,350	5,800	JOR. WOODSTOCK KILLS	10.5	3.08	2	350	2275	6.50	6.50	-	
5,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. IND.	14.6	3.77	53	13950	74350	5.37	5.30	-0750	
2,940	2,250	JORDAN OIL	6.4	9.65	1	100	268	2.88	2.68	-	
1,570	1,020	JOR. PIPES MANFACT.	15.4	6.45	3	780	967	1.27	1.24	-03-	
1,420	770	RAPHA INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	5	500	3053	6.26	6.28	+02+	
4,630	4,400	DAR ALDINA DV. INV.	15.3	0.01	1	500	311	6.26	6.23	-03-	
600	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.6	0.00	41	75250	37156	0.50	0.50	-	
1,140	680	ARAB PAPER COV. IND.	23.5	0.00	2	1050	809	7.78	7.77	-01-	
1,140	660	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	2	650	442	6.68	6.68	-	
540	510	NATIONAL TILES	9	0.00	2	500	265	0.57	0.57	-	
960	370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	18	16300	7305	4.45	4.45	-	
3,000	1,360	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	13.8	6.54	3	800	1234	1.60	1.53	-07-	
3,000	920	KATL. CABLE MFG. CO.	29.4	0.00	32	16900	22969	1.23	1.22	-01-	
1,790	530	JOR. SULPHUR-CHINA	17.8	0.00	24	3950	632	5.22	5.22	-	
1,150	1,150	ARAB PHARM. IND.	10.6	5.07	10	5300	7324	1.39	1.38	-01-	
1,670	810	UNIV. MED. IND.	10.8	0.00	220	138	129920	1.3800	1.03	1.08	+05+
1,010	690	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	10.0	32.50	11	5000	7155	1.00	1.00	-01-	
1,350	1000	WOL. CHEM. CO.	11.1	6.07	4	3480	5229	1.51	1.50	-01-	
1,480	610	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	19.2	0.00	49	49950	51222	1.03	1.05	+02+	
1,080	1,290	EL -ZAY READY WEAR	60.9	0.00	4	2750	3058	1.43	1.39	-02-	
1,080	1,080	LIVEL. TORONTO	10.5	0.00	10	1075	1809	1.20	1.19	-01-	
1,220	860	UNION CF. & VEG.	49.1	0.00	19	16700	18081	1.10	1.08	-02-	
880	660	JORDAN STEEL	37.1	6.10	41	43400	35187	0.79	0.82	+03+	
1,450	570	KID. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	15.63	13	22000	14080	0.64	0.64	-	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 114.76 %CHG: -0.66 533 -459196 491148											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 170.58 %CHG: -0.27 671 641314 1163035											



# Hardaway gone for rest of NBA season

ORLANDO (AFP) — Orlando guard Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway will miss the last 22 games of the National Basketball Association season with a sore left calf that kept him out the past month.

"It's an overstressed tendon in my calf," Hardaway said. "It was a result of coming back too early. Right now I'm going to just sit out the season. It's best for me to stay out now and get fully healthy."

Combined with a knee injury that sidelined Hardaway earlier this year, Penny has missed 43 games of a 32-30 Magic season. He underwent knee surgery in December.

Due to the sore calf, he has not played since February 13. "I've gotten a lot of knocks about my knee being injured and people saying it probably won't ever get well. So, I'm just going to wait until I get 100 per cent and come back and play good basketball," he said.

The Magic are battling New Jersey and Washington for the final Eastern Conference playoff berth and a likely first-round playoff date with the reigning champion Chicago Bulls.

Hardaway has 16.4 points, four rebounds and 3.6 assists a game. The Magic struggled to a 13-18 mark without Hardaway earlier but have been sparked in the past month by Nick Anderson, who has 20 points a game since Hardaway's latest departure.

"It's not a surprise. We haven't had him all year it seems," Orlando coach Chuck Daly said. "I could tell with the way it was going that he probably wouldn't be back. It's unfortunate, but that's the way it is."

Guard Mark Price, who missed nine games after suffering ligament damage in his left thumb last month, was activated to replace Hardaway.

## Metz surge further clear

PARIS (AFP) — Metz opened up a four point lead at the top of the French first division Friday night when a goal from Cyril Serredum seven minutes from time gave the leaders a 1-0 victory at Montpellier.

The win was particularly valuable since defending champions Monaco, already beaten last weekend at home by Lens, crashed again at Auxerre.

Guy Roux's side, eliminated from the French league cup after a penalty shoot-out on Tuesday, produced a superb 3-1 win — Steve Marlet scoring twice and talented midfielder player Sahri Lamouchi also finding the net for the home side.

Monaco pulled one back through their international striker David Trezeguet in the 78th minute but it was too little too late.

It was just the result Auxerre needed before their UEFA Cup quarter-final return against Italian giants Lazio who will be travelling to France with only a one goal advantage after the first leg.

Bordeaux continued their success run by coming away 2-1 winners from Nantes. Strasbourg saw off visiting Rennes 3-1 and Lyon scored a 2-0 victory at Toulouse.

Cannes slumped back in the relegation zone when they crashed 2-0 at Le Havre and — Guingamp shared a goalless draw with Chateauroux in a bottom-of-the-table showdown. Metz closest rivals — Lens, who have 52 points, and Marseille, who have 50 play on Saturday.

Lens, who are at home to Paris St. Germain, will be looking for revenge after PSG's Wednesday victory over Lens in the French League Cup semi-final while Marseille are at home to Bastia.



Manchester United's striker Teddy Sheringham (L) is tackled by Arsenal captain Tony Adams while Emmanuel Petit watches. The game at Old Trafford is part of the FA Premiership (Reuters photo)

## Overmars fires Gunners to victory over United

LONDON (AFP) — The race for the English Premiership title took a fresh twist on Saturday when a late goal by Dutchman Marc Overmars gave Arsenal a dramatic 1-0 win over leaders Manchester United at Old Trafford.

Winger Overmars, a constant threat to United throughout the game, coolly buried the winner on 80 minutes after a neat flick-on by substitute Nicolas Anelka sent him clear through on goal.

Arsenal's victory, their first at Old Trafford since 1990, puts them firmly in contention for the title and they are now just six points behind United with three games in hand.

Arsene Wenger's side were up against the best home record in the league. United had conceded just six goals in the Premiership at Old Trafford and the Londoners had not scored at the 'Theatre of Dreams' since 1991.

But Overmars' goal proved a fair reward for the Gunners, unbeaten in the League for three months, who were much the better side for most of the match. United have not won any of the four matches they have played this month.

Arsenal almost scored after 13 minutes when Dennis Bergkamp released his compatriot Overmars down the left and the winger dribbled past United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel before shooting just inches wide from the acute angle.

Overmars went close again 10 minutes later with a powerful drive which Schmeichel did well to keep out.

But a clumsy error by Arsenal's veteran full back Lee Dixon almost gifted United a goal they didn't deserve.

Dixon gave the ball away to Andy Cole, who was tackled by Tony Adams, but the ball fell to Teddy Sheringham who saw his low shot superbly saved by rising Austrian star, Alex Manninger in the Gunners' goal.

Bergkamp then released Overmars down the left again and the Gunners unsuccessfully appealed for a penalty after he went down under a challenge from Curtis.

Overmars went close again on the half hour when he tricked his way through the United defence only to shoot into the side netting.

The visitors, who beat United 3-2 at Highbury in

November, continued to create most of the chances and a minute later, Ray Parlour broke down the right but lifted the ball over the advancing Schmeichel and the United goal.

Cole was in an offside position when he received Schmeichel's long kick on 38 minutes, but the assistant referee did not flag and the United striker ran through only for Manninger to save impressively.

After 61 minutes Overmars was again just inches away from opening the scoring after Emmanuel Petit found him in the box with an exquisite chipped pass.

Ronnie Johnsen fired just past the angle from a fine United move before Scholes blazed over from Thornley's cross.

But Overmars finally broke the stalemate 10 minutes from time when he burst on to Anelka's flick to score past Schmeichel in the bottom corner. It was his 11th goal of the season.

United, who face Monaco in a European Cup quarter-final on Wednesday night, must be worried by their slump. In their last nine Premiership matches they have scored only nine times and taken only 11 points.

## Fredericks still waiting for his 1994 medal

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Double Olympic sprint silver medalist Frankie Fredericks threatened Saturday to boycott the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur unless he receives his medal from the 1994 Games in Victoria, Canada.

Speaking on his arrival here, Fredericks said he finished fourth in the 100m final in Victoria, but was promoted to third place after second-placed Horace Doye Edwin was disqualified after testing positive for steroids.

He said he is still waiting for his bronze medal.

"I ran in the 200m as well and was around in the athletes' village for quite some time after the 100m final, so there is no excuse why the organisers did not get my medal to me," Fredericks told a press conference.

"If I don't receive my medal soon, I won't go to Kuala Lumpur."

The Namibian athlete flew to South Africa to compete in Monday's second Grand Prix Summer Series track meeting in Rodepoort, and Friday's series final in Cape Town. Fresh from a short campaign on the Australian outdoor circuit, Fredericks said he believes American sprinters Tim Montgomery and Brian Lewis could have an advantage over him after their stints on the world indoor scene.

"I believe that a sprint athlete is sharper when having competed on the indoor circuit," he added.

"The distance in the short sprint is 60m, and while at the start of the outdoor season an athlete may still be a bit slow at the start of the 100m, there is still time to make up for it because the race is 40m longer than indoors."

Fredericks has dipped under 10 seconds in the 100m on 17 occasions in competition, more times than any other athlete. American Carl Lewis has broken the 10 second barrier 15 times.

Apart from the sprinters, other international athletes competing in the summer series include U.S. indoor champion Omar Clay (200m), the American Harrison twins Alvin and Calvin (400m), Ukrainian world 200m champion Zhanna Pintusevich, U.S. sprint star Chryste Gaines (100m), Ukrainian hurdler Tatyana Tereshchuk, Nigeria's Olympic bronze medalist Fallat Ogunkoya (400m) and European high jump champion Monica Iagar of Romania.



Dutch speed skater Ids Postma in action during his men's 5000 metres all round World Speed Skating Championship race in Heerenveen March 13. Postma won the race in a time of 6:33.09 minutes and takes the lead in the overall standings (Reuters photo)

## Unhappy Stoichkov terminates Barca contract

BARCELONA (AFP) — Barcelona's controversial Bulgarian striker Hristo Stoichkov on Friday said he had terminated his contract with the club and took the opportunity to attack the Catalan outfit's officials.

"I am sad," said Stoichkov, who has been on the sidelines under the reign of Dutch coach Louis Van Gaal and has only managed 59 minutes of first team football this season.

The 32-year-old, who started in Bulgaria's run to the 1994 World Cup semi-finals, won the hearts of Barca fans under the ultra-successful reign of Johan Cruyff and was part of the team which won the 1992 European Champions Cup.

He was later offloaded to Parma of Italy, where he had an unhappy few months before returning to the Nou Camp last summer.

Stoichkov claimed his absence from the team was down to political machinations. "They (club management) didn't dare to say I didn't have a place in the team because elections to the club presidency were on the point of taking place," the veteran striker said.

The final break came Thursday when Van Gaal reportedly told Stoichkov he had no first-team future.

Stoichkov had previously denounced Van Gaal's rigid tactical system and last September said he wished Cruyff was still in charge as he was "the only coach who taught me anything."

And he criticised president Jose Luis Nunez for not intervening to help him, while also blaming Nunez for allowing former stars such as Diego Maradona and Ronaldo to leave the club.

The Bulgarian international said his immediate future was unclear.

"I have to make the most of the next three months to prepare for the World Cup," he said, adding he knew nothing of a possible move to CSKA Sofia.

Stoichkov, who called a press conference to reveal he was quitting Barca, first joined the Catalan giants in 1990.

He won the Golden Boot as top scorer in Europe in 1993 and scored 117 goals for the club.

As well as winning the Champions Cup, Stoichkov won four league championships, medals between 1991 and 1994, the Cup Winners Cup in 1997 as well as the Spanish Cup.

## SCOREBOARD

### Evert Cup

Semi-finals:  
Martina Hingis (Svi x1) bt Venus Williams (USA x8)  
6-0, 7-6 (9/7)

### Champions Cup

Quarter-finals:  
Marcelo Rios (Chi x7) bt Petr Korda (Cze x2)  
6-4, 6-2  
Greg Rusedski (Gbr x6) bt Thomas Enqvist (Swe)  
2-6, 7-6 (7/1), 6-4  
Thomas Muster (Aut) bt Andrei Medvedev (Ukr)  
5-7, 6-3, 6-4

### Copenhagen ATP Tour

Semi-finals:  
David Prinosil (Ger) bt Jan Siemerink (Ned x4)  
6-3, 7-6 (7/5)  
Magnus Gustafsson (Swe x2) bt Kenneth Carlsen (Den)  
6-4, 5-7, 6-2

### Portuguese First Division

Varzim 0 Sporting 1

### French First Division

Nantes	1	Bordeaux	2
Le Havre	2	Cannes	0
Guingamp	0	Chateauroux	0
Toulouse	0	Lyon	2
Montpellier	0	Metz	1
Auxerre	3	Mouaco	1
Strasbourg	3	Rennes	1

## GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAYANAH HIRSCH  
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### SPOTCARDS DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Neither vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH		EAST	
♠ J 9 6 3	♠ Q 10 7 5 2	♠ Q 10 7 5 2	♠ Q 10 7 5 2
♥ 9 6	♥ 9 6	♥ 9 6	♥ 9 6
♦ A Q 8 6 4 2	♦ A Q 8 6 4 2	♦ A Q 8 6 4 2	♦ A Q 8 6 4 2
♣ 8 4	♣ 8 4	♣ 8 4	♣ 8 4

The bidding:  
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST  
2♣ Pass 3♣ Pass 4♣ Pass 5♣ Pass  
6♣ Pass 7♣ Pass 8♣ Pass 9♣ Pass

Opening lead: Queen of ♣

In one sense, all finesses are equal — they stand a 50 percent chance of succeeding. But there are all sorts of factors that can sway you to choose one over another, which defender you would rather have on lead; what your possibilities are of developing additional tricks in the suit, etc. Here is an example of a slight extra chance a specific finesse may give you.

The best contract for North-South is three no trump by North, but it is nearly impossible to get there. The auction shown, starting with an "artificial" and forcing two-club opening and a natural positive response left North in the awkward position of having to take preference with a singleton.

With a lead other than a trump, declarer would have had an easy road to 10 tricks. All declarer need do is ruff a diamond in dummy and the hand will make any where from 10 to 12 tricks, depending on how trumps break and whether the queen of diamonds comes down.

The trump lead, however, left declarer with a choice of lines. A successful finesse in either minor suit would deliver the fulfilling trick. Is there any reason for choosing one over the other?

Decidedly! But first declarer should win the trump, cash the other high trump and continue the suit in case it breaks evenly. Let's assume that, after winning the third heart, West shifts to a club. The decisive moment is at hand.

If declarer takes the finesse and it loses, there is no way to recover — even if the queen of diamonds is singleton or doubleton. South is saddled with a diamond loser. So declarer rose with the ace and led a diamond to the jack, losing to the queen. But when declarer later cashed the ace and king of diamonds falling the eight and ten, the seven became the fulfilling trick. A fortunate outcome to be sure, but well earned.

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 2	GALLERIA 1	Hisham Yanes Theatre
	Demi Moore ... in <b>G.I. JANE</b> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Pierce Brosnan as James Bond... in <b>007...TOMORROW NEVER DIES</b> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	The biggest cinema production <b>TITANIC</b> Shows: 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m. <b>I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER</b> Shows: 12:30 p.m.	Adel Imam & Yusra ... in <b>RISALA ILA AL WALI</b> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 <b>TITANIC</b> Shows: 8, 9:30 P.M. <b>LONG KISS GOODNIGHT</b> Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:20, 10:30	ABDOUN <b>GRAND OPENING</b> <b>TITANIC</b> Shows: 5:15, 8:45 The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	ABDOUN <b>GRAND OPENING</b> <b>TITANIC</b> Shows: 5:15, 8:45 The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays	<b>NOW ON DAILY</b> <b>THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE</b> Starring Hisham Yanes and his group For reservations call: 4640155, 462155





Sweden's Ylva Nowen clears a gate on her way to place 8th, with a time of 1:31.37, in the women's World Cup slalom race in Crans Montana March 14. The race was won by Slovenia's Urska Hrovat ahead of Germany's Martina Ertl and Olympic champion Hilde Gerg, also of Germany. Nowen won the overall women's Alpine skiing World Cup slalom title with 620 points (Reuters photo)

## Eberharther leads Austrian cleansweep

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland (AFP) — Stephan Eberharther won Saturday's World Cup final giant slalom race here as Austrian skiers finished 1-2-3 — it was the 29-year-old Austrian's first ever World Cup win.

Eberharther, fastest after the first run, finished with a combined time of 2min 22.97sec. Then came his compatriots Hans Knauss, at 0.23, and dual Olympic gold medallist Hermann

Maier at 0.92.

Maier, who had already clinched the men's overall World Cup title and the Super G title, sealed the giant slalom honours with his third-place finish.

For Eberharther, who won two world titles in 1991, it represented a great comeback after a succession of knee injuries had blighted previous seasons. Maier, nicknamed the 'Hermineator', ensured he claimed his third World

Cup title when he finished ahead of major rival Michael Von Gruenigen of Switzerland, who could finish only sixth.

Former Italian master Alberto Tomba failed to sign off with a grand finale as only 11th after the first run he pushed too hard on the second leg and missed a gate.

## Rios avenges Aussie Open defeat

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — Marcelo Rios ousted World No. 2 Petr Korda 6-4, 6-2 here Friday to avenge his defeat by the Czech in the final of the Australian Open final.

Rios, the seventh seed, needed just 65 minutes to dispose of Korda, also dashing the Czech veteran's hopes of taking over as the World No. 1 from American Pete Sampras on Monday.

A victory in this tournament, after Sampras was upset by former World No. 1 Thomas Muster in the third round Thursday, could have given Korda the top spot.

Instead he found himself on the scrap heap with Sampras, third-seeded Australian Pat Rafter, fourth-seeded Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov and fifth-seeded Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden.

Korda made Rios' task easier with 31 unforced



Marcelo Rios

errors. The Chilean converted five of his seven break chances while Korda could only take advantage of one

of his five opportunities.

In the semi-finals, Rios will face an unseeded player, either the resurgent Andre Agassi or 20-year-

old wildcard Jan-Michael Gambill.

The two Americans were due to meet in the show-case match on Friday night.

## Leverkusen blow opportunity to threaten Bayern

COLOGNE (AFP) — Bayer Leverkusen missed their chance to leapfrog Bayern Munich and steal second place from the Bavarians in the Bundesliga on Friday evening when Duisburg held them to a 1-1 draw.

Markus Osthoff put Duisburg ahead after four minutes but Brazilian Emerson equalised for the home side before the break.

Hard on Bayer's heels are Schalke, who defeated Hertha Berlin 4-1, ending Hertha's seven-month streak without a loss in their Olympic stadium.

Schalke went ahead through Marc Wilmots in the 22nd minute and followed up with second half goals by captain Olaf Thon



Carsten Ramelow (L) of German soccer club Bayer Leverkusen and Stefan Emmerling of MSV Duisburg fight for the ball during a German first league match in Duisburg. The match ended in a draw 1-1 (Reuters photo)

(46th), Martin Max (74th) and Andreas Mueller (90th).

Michael Preetz scored a consolation for Hertha in the 54th minute in front of

60,000 disappointed spectators.

Leverkusen and Schalke keep their places, third and fourth respectively, but the distance between them has shrunk to only two points.

Kaiserslautern, who play 1860 Munich Saturday,

remain top with 54 points. Bayern Munich, who play Bochum, have 47 while Leverkusen are on 46 and Schalke 44.

## Hingis survives second set scare to reach Evert Cup final

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — Switzerland's Martina Hingis reminded ambitious Venus Williams just who is the world No. 1 Friday, by defeating the eighth-seeded American in straight sets to reach the final of the Evert Cup.

Hingis, the top seed who is playing here for the first time, crushed Williams in the first set, but had to fight off a set point in the second-set tiebreak before taking the match 6-0, 7-6 (9/7).

In the final, she'll face defending champion and second seed Lindsay Davenport, who advanced on Thursday night when German veteran Steffi Graf retired with a strained hamstring in the third set of their semifinal.

Hingis, who beat Williams in the final of the U.S. Open last year, avenged a three-set loss to the American at Sydney earlier this year.

She admitted that she always found it especially sweet to beat a player who had beaten her.

"That motivates me even more, yes of course," she said. "I don't like to lose against the same player all the time, just match by match."

"I'm always more focused if I lose to somebody."

She also acknowledged that Williams' outspoken intention of claiming the world No. 1 ranking — she is currently No. 12 — gave her matches against the American a little extra spark.

"Nobody would like to lose against players like this, especially when they're saying they're going to be No. 1," Hingis said.

"So far I'm at that place. There's Lindsay No. 2. We're in the finals again."

That fact didn't stop Williams, who, like Hingis, is 17 years old, from repeating her prediction that she and younger sister Serena would soon be dominating the women's game.

"She said that again?" Hingis asked with wide eyes, but her surprise quickly faded. "Well, it's nothing new any more."

Her only other response: "Well, so far she's not."

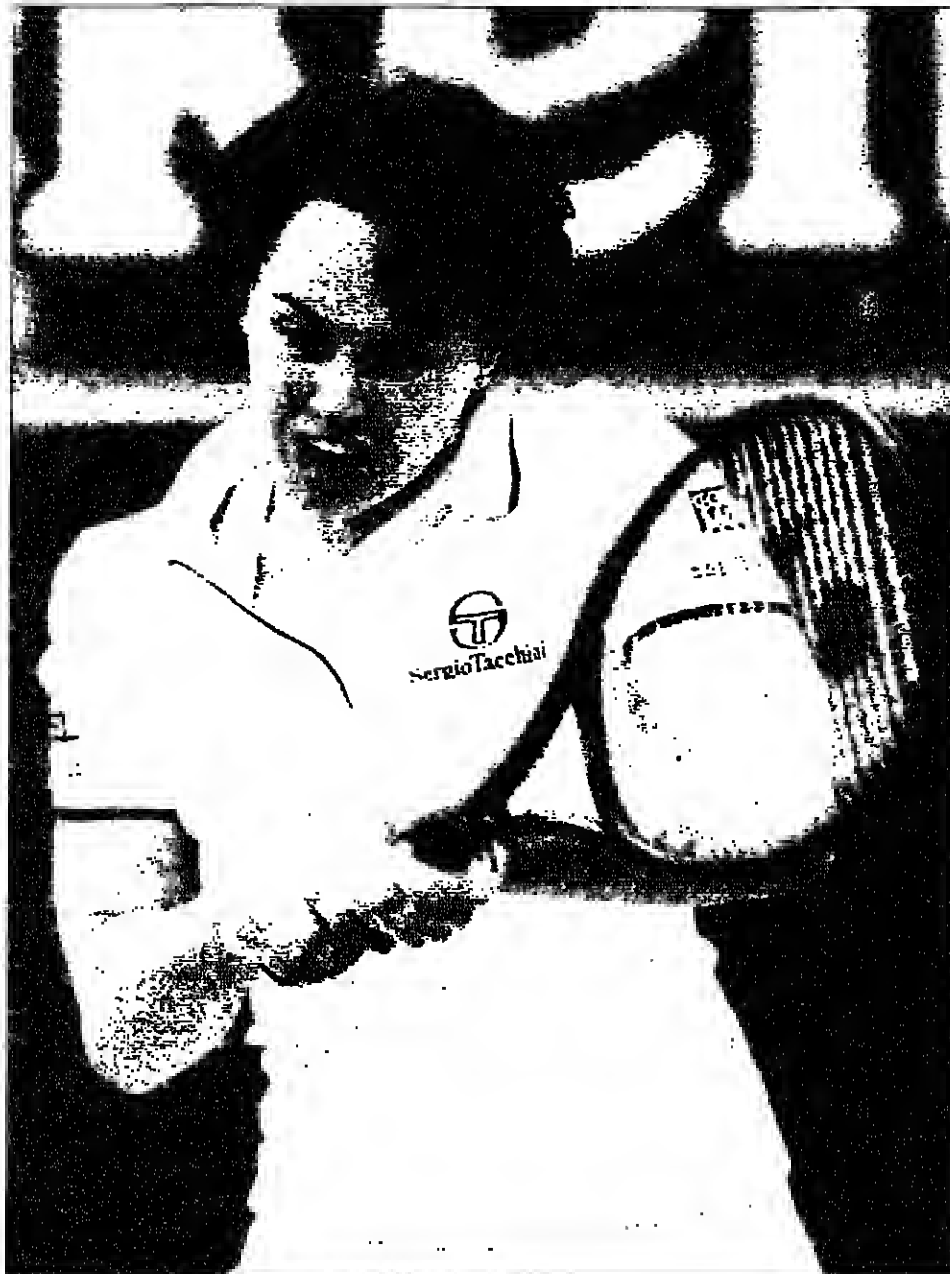
For all her bluster, Williams was painfully aware of that fact on Friday.

Williams, who won her first WTA Tour title in Oklahoma City last week, fought back from 2-4 down in the second, breaking Hingis back in the eighth game and holding serve to lead 5-4.

She survived a break point in the 11th game, and a match point at 6-5 in the tiebreaker.

She went on to win the next two points to give herself a chance to take the set, but she netted a service return then made two backhand errors and it was all over after one hour and 24 minutes.

Consistency, she thought, was a key difference between where she is now and where she wants to be.



Martina Hingis



Venus Williams

"She really doesn't have ups and downs," Williams observed of Hingis.

"She might get angry at herself and miss a shot, it's not like a lot of other players will do, miss shots for

three games. "She's really working hard to make sure she maintains her position. She maintained it today against me."

"I'll look at myself and find out what I'm doing wrong. Obviously, she's very serious, so I have to get more serious in the future, take her example."

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Interested parties may obtain additional information by contacting:

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P.O. Box: 560 Al Jubeiha  
Jordan 11941  
Fax: 833895

e-mail: edts@nchr.gov.jo

Proposals are to be submitted not later than 12:00 noon on April 12, 1998.

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## Butler hails 'new spirit' on Iraqi inspections

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler on Friday hailed a "new spirit" of cooperation on inspections following a week of surveillance by an American-led team of arms experts.

Mr. Butler, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of Iraqi disarmament, will begin two days of talks with Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz on March 22, his first trip to Baghdad since a crisis over U.N. arms inspections was defused last month.

He said new inspections of eight presidential compounds that include presidential palaces and about 1,000 other structures would begin "a couple of days" after he left the Iraqi capital on March 26.

Mr. Butler said he had hope that all inspections would be carried out smoothly, not just those at the presidential palaces, negotiated in a special accord by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Feb. 23.

Asked if this was due to Mr. Annan's intervention with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, he said he believed the orders "did come from the top" when American Scott Ritter earlier this week led a team of inspectors to eight sites, including the headquarters of Iraq's defence ministry.

"There is a new spirit out there. I think that is what the Ritter exercise showed," he said.

Mr. Butler said the usual procedures for inspecting sensitive sites had been simplified and that Mr. Ritter had conveyed this to Mr. Annan, who asked to speak with the inspector on Friday.

"Scott Ritter was able to report to the secretary-general that he considered, and I certainly agree, that we had established some new procedures, some new benchmarks, for access to sites that Iraq chooses to declare as sensitive."

"We are hopeful that having gained that access... they will be a benchmark and they will be available to us in the future," he said.

Mr. Butler's commission is in charge of scrapping Iraq's chemical, biological and ballistic missiles, a key requirement before sweeping sanctions imposed on Baghdad after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, can be lifted.

"We have come a long way on missiles, a fairly long way in chemistry and we still need to go a long way in biology," he said.

Mr. Butler, who was Australia's U.N. representative before becoming UNSCOM chief in July 1997, has been exonerated by Iraqi officials and in the country's govern-

ment-controlled press.

A crisis over Iraq's refusal to give U.N. weapons teams unimpeded access to all sites they wish to inspect was defused when Mr. Annan signed the accord guaranteeing entry to all facilities, including eight so-called "presidential sites." This headed off the threat of U.S. air attacks.

Under the agreement, a new UNSCOM commissioner, Jayantha Dhanapala, a Sri Lankan diplomat and disarmament expert, has been appointed to head a special group that will inspect "presidential sites."

He arrived in Baghdad on Wednesday and will be joining Mr. Butler for talks with Mr. Aziz.

In addition to weapons experts, the special group will include senior diplomats acting as observers, as a gesture to Iraq's concern for its "sovereignty and dignity."

Mr. Butler said he was setting up the first teams, which would survey all sites to set up "baselines" or reference points for future inspections of the presidential compounds.

He said the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, in charge of analysing Iraq's nuclear potential, would send 10 inspectors while Mr. Dhanapala would organise the diplomats that would join the teams.

## Iraq wants to try Clinton, Bush and Thatcher for 'crimes'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Saturday announced it would form a "public tribunal" to judge U.S. President Bill Clinton, former U.S. President George Bush, and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for "crimes against the Iraqi people."

The official Iraqi news agency INA reported that a meeting was held Saturday under the direction of the ruling Baath Party and attended by "public organisations" to examine the "modalities of holding such a trial."

The Iraqi initiative follows a non-binding U.S. Senate resolution Friday calling for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to be tried and convicted by an international tribunal for war crimes.

The non-binding "sense of the Senate" resolution, approved 93-0, calls on Mr. Clinton to work with the United Nations to convene a tribunal similar to those that followed World War II and recent conflicts in Bosnia and Rwanda.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al-Sahhaf on Friday called the U.S. Senate gesture "non-sense."

## Judge grants Iraqi asylum over U.S. objection

LOS ANGELES (R) — An Iraqi who fled his homeland after a bid to overthrow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein failed was granted political asylum in the United States on Friday, despite efforts by the government to have him declared a national security risk.

Hashim Hawlery, one of eight dissidents detained by the U.S. after they were airlifted from northern Iraq with about 600 men, women and children, was due to be released from jail Friday evening.

Mr. Hawlery was granted asylum by U.S. Immigration Judge D.D. Sitgraves on Friday, two days after she ordered six of Mr. Hawlery's co-defendants deported, having found that they posed a national security risk.

Earlier this year, Ms. Sitgraves ruled that Mr. Hawlery and one other man, Mohammad Quaisar, did not pose a risk and could apply for asylum.

Ms. Sitgraves' rulings were based on hearings conducted largely behind closed doors, secret even from defence attorneys because they centred on classified documents and testimony from FBI agents.

Large portions of her written decisions were also sealed.

Mr. Hawlery, the first of the eight men to be released since their incarceration in October of 1996, was expected to join his wife and seven children in the Los Angeles suburb of Glendale upon his release, his attorney Neils Frenzen said.

The six men who Ms. Sitgraves ordered deported claim that, if they are returned to Iraq, they will be executed by the government.

Mr. Frenzen has said that he considers it unlikely the U.S. government would deport the men to Iraq, but is mulling an appeal of the order because otherwise, he said, the men could simply be detained indefinitely.



Workers unload one of a pair of 8-foot Oscar statues encrusted with gold mosaic Friday outside the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, as preparation gets underway for the March 23 Academy Awards. Italian mosaics will be used extensively in decorating the Governor's Ball that follows the awards show (Reuters photo)

## Israel will review riot procedure after journalists were injured

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Army chief General Amnon Shahak said Saturday his troops would review their riot control procedures after cameramen accused soldiers of deliberately shooting at them in Hebron.

Thirty journalists marched through Hebron to protest the shooting the previous night, when three Palestinian cameramen were shot with rubber-coated bullets by soldiers firing on Palestinian protesters.

The journalists accused the army of intentionally firing on them while they covered the disturbances in the West Bank city and even after they had moved away from the stone-throwers.

"We were standing far away from the scene after settlers threw stones at us," said Naji Dana, a cameraman for French television who was shot in the leg with a rubber-coated bullet.

"Suddenly the Israeli soldiers started shooting at us even though we shouted, 'We are journalists,'" he told AFP. Israeli television showed pictures of Reuters cameraman Nael Shyokhi as he lay bleed-

ing and rolling in agony on the ground after he was shot in the head by an Israeli soldier with a rubber-coated bullet.

Even as light from the camera illuminated Mr. Shyokhi, he was hit by another rubber bullet in the back.

Mr. Dana said soldiers continued to shoot at the group of journalists as they tried to put Mr. Shyokhi in a car to take him to hospital.

But the army said the soldiers shot toward the stone-throwers.

"The soldiers did not notice the cameramen and shot in the direction of the rioting crowd," the army spokesman said. "It must be noted that the area was dark."

The army said it would try to make sure those not throwing stones were not hit by soldiers in the future.

Chief of staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak called on the troops to review procedures for dispersing riots to ensure that civilians are not injured and that all orders are followed, the army spokesman said.

The demonstration overnight broke out when Israeli settlers

entered a Palestinian-controlled section of the city and threw stones at Palestinians, the army said.

When the settlers were pushed back by soldiers, Palestinians began throwing stones at the army and settlers, prompting the soldiers to fire rubber-coated bullets on the Palestinians, the army added.

Three Israeli soldiers were injured in the disturbances, the spokesman said. Fourteen Palestinians were injured, including three journalists, Israel Radio reported.

Israeli police said they would detain the settlers involved in the incident for questioning on charges of disturbing the peace and refusing to disperse when ordered to by the soldiers.

The left-wing Meretz Party called on the army Saturday to arrest the settlers who began the disturbances.

Palestinians have demonstrated around the West Bank this week after Israeli soldiers shot and killed three Palestinian workers at a road-block near Hebron (see story on page 1).

## Legislator wants to wipe Clinton off U.S. map

CLINTON TOWNSHIP (R) — A New Jersey legislator is so angered by Bill Clinton's alleged sexual exploits he wants to wipe the president's name off the map. Republican Michael Carroll submitted a bill in the state legislature on March 2 to rename this town of 12,451 people and its sister Town of Clinton, with 2,400 residents. The proposed new names? Reagan Township and the town of Reagan, in honour of the former president. Residents are not amused. "I think it's silly," township clerk Lois Tereri said. "It's a waste of taxpayers' money."

## Canadian hotel offers room service for pets

VANCOUVER (R) — What do you order for the pet that has everything? Room service. Vancouver's Sutton Place Hotel offers special meals for the dogs and cats of guests who make extended stays at the luxury establishment. Under the new service, travelling pets are given a choice of grilled Alberta T-bone steak or seared tuna fillet topped with caviar. Pets who receive room service are also treated to a bedtime snack — anchovy-flavoured popcorn for cats — a storybook and card with a weather forecast. "It allows them to plan their day," said Sutton Place spokeswoman Judy Ahola.

## Colombia doctors find possible twin inside baby

BOGOTA (R) — Colombian doctors removing a suspected tumour from the abdomen of a four-month-old baby instead discovered a well-formed foetus. Staff at the Rafael Urbina clinic in Cali said the discovery was made during an operation on Monday on a baby boy with a swollen midriff. Doctors said it was the first case in Colombia of a medical condition known as "fetus in fetus" and one of less than 100 worldwide. The 15-cm long embryo had survived by attaching itself to a vein within the baby's intestines. The most probable theory is that the foetus was a twin absorbed by the other inside the womb.

## God moves in mysterious ways for British preacher

LONDON (R) — An evangelist who took to the skies in his paraglider to spread the Word crashed to earth with a criminal record. John Holme was fined \$1,730 after he admitted flying too close to a populated area on his heavenly mission. "I thought that if they heard this voice from the sky, they would think it was God," Holme said. When Holme made his maiden voyage in a motorised paraglider he dive-bombed a Salisbury housing estate, astonishing local gardeners as he dodged bird tables, trees and fences. Residents said they saw sheer horror in his eyes. But Holme — who claimed to see heaven over Salisbury — says he never lost faith.

## Thing about men and directions is true

GAINESVILLE (R) — Remember the popular wisdom that men hate to ask directions, but women always know where everything is? University of Florida research released on Thursday supports both beliefs, finding that men are more confident that they can remember where anything is without help, but women are much better at knowing where things are. "To say that when it comes to memory, women have more skill than confidence and men have more confidence than skill is a simplistic way to put it, but we found it to be true in this study," said Robin West, a psychology professor who led the research.

## Hindus poised to take power in India; Sonia new Congress chief

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Hindu nationalists came nearer to forming India's next government Saturday as Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born widow of former Premier Rajiv Gandhi, was elected the new head of the Congress Party.

Ms. Gandhi, 51, took over from discredited president Sitaram Kesri, who announced his resignation Monday after the once-dominant party's disastrous showing in the national elections.

The Hindu nationalists, on the threshold of taking power, have branded her a "foreigner" with no place in national politics. Ms. Gandhi acquired Indian citizenship in 1986, 18 years after her marriage.

Ms. Gandhi had no previous political experience before campaigning for the 113-year-old party, led by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty for much of this century, for the February-March polls.

She was elected at a meeting of the party's policy-making Congress Working Committee (CWC).

Attending a party leadership meeting she said: "The nation is passing through critical times in

which its democratic and secular fabric has been put to test."

Outgoing president Kesri, 82, stunned out, announcing he was withdrawing his resignation and describing Ms. Gandhi's succession as "illegal."

The Congress, led by independence heroes such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, has been steadily losing support since the early 1980s.

It ruled the country for 45 of the past 50 years but was overtaken as the largest parliamentary party in 1996.

It won 141 seats in the current elections, almost 40 seats behind the Hindu nationalists and matching its worst-ever showing two years ago.

Some analysts say Ms. Gandhi's move is aimed at keeping a political career open for either her son or daughter while her rivals claim she hopes to shield the family name from corruption allegations.

A key ally of the nationalists, meanwhile, ended days of wavering and gave his backing to the Hindu right-wing BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian People's Party) in writing.

The BJP, seen by rivals as a threat to India's secular constitution, said it was now up to the country's president to invite its leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, as prime minister.

India, plagued by years of crippling political instability, is electing its fifth government within two years. The latest elections produced a badly-fragmented parliament, with no party able to form a government.

The end of the impasse came Saturday after the AIADMK, a regional party whose support is crucial for the BJP, announced it would back a Vajpayee-led coalition. The AIADMK fought the polls within the BJP alliance, which fell just short of a majority in a 545-seat lower house, but then backtracked, holding the coalition to ransom.

The AIADMK's latest U-turn, however, now gives the BJP bloc, made up of more than a dozen allies, 264 seats. That still leaves them short of the 273 majority mark. But the BJP, whose first Indian government in 1996 lasted just 13 days, expect to scrape through a confidence vote due to abstentions.